

By: Eiland

H.R. No. 835

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The Texas House of Representatives is proud to pay
2 tribute to the life of Lone Star native John Arthur "Jack" Johnson
3 of Galveston, the first African American to win the world
4 heavyweight boxing championship, for his immense talent and
5 courage; and

6 WHEREAS, Born March 31, 1878, Mr. Johnson became interested
7 in boxing as a teenager while working at a local gymnasium; after
8 sharpening his skills, this gifted athlete fought more than 100
9 fights in three decades, posting fewer than a dozen losses against
10 fearsome competition; and

11 WHEREAS, At a time when other recognized American boxers
12 refused to meet him in the ring because of his color, Mr. Johnson
13 initially competed overseas, defeating Canadian Tommy Burns in
14 Australia in 1908 to become heavyweight champion of the world; his
15 bout two years later against fellow American Jim "The Great White
16 Hope" Jeffries has been called one of the greatest boxing matches of
17 all time, and ended with Mr. Johnson scoring a knockout in the 15th
18 round; and

19 WHEREAS, He successfully defended his title against such
20 other formidable challengers as Stanley Ketchel and Jim Flynn,
21 holding the heavyweight crown until 1915, and continued to
22 participate in exhibition matches as late as 1945; and

23 WHEREAS, Already a hero for saving lives during the deadly
24 Galveston hurricane in 1900, Mr. Johnson demonstrated personal

1 courage again in World War I; he was in Spain when the United States
2 entered the war, and he immediately contacted the United States
3 Embassy in Madrid to offer his services to his country; his
4 involvement in the region's military intelligence operations
5 helped to prevent German U-boat crews from infiltrating the Spanish
6 coast; and

7 WHEREAS, The life of this talented and often controversial
8 man has been chronicled by award-winning documentary filmmaker Ken
9 Burns, who has brought a fresh perspective to the unique story of
10 Jack Johnson, while also creating awareness of the important role
11 that he played in the evolution of boxing; and

12 WHEREAS, Jack Johnson was tragically killed in a car crash in
13 1946, and his death was keenly felt by many people; one of the Lone
14 Star State's greatest athletes, he was immortalized in 1954 when he
15 was posthumously inducted into the Boxing Hall of Fame, and he will
16 long be remembered for his incredible legacy of achievements; now,
17 therefore, be it

18 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 79th Texas
19 Legislature hereby recognize March 31, 2005, as Jack A. Johnson Day
20 and encourage all Texans to learn more about this remarkable
21 champion.