

By: Dutton

H.R. No. 958

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, With the passing of Robert O. Dawson, who died at his
2 home in Fentress on February 26, 2005, the State of Texas has lost a
3 gifted educator, scholar, and much-loved mentor whose influence
4 will resonate in the law and in the lives of those fortunate enough
5 to have known him; and

6 WHEREAS, A graduate of the University of Missouri, Professor
7 Dawson earned his doctor of jurisprudence degree from Washington
8 University and his doctor of judicial science degree from the
9 University of Wisconsin and worked as both a public defender and a
10 prosecutor in addition to his career as a professor; and

11 WHEREAS, In 1967 he began teaching at The University of
12 Texas, where he held the Bryant Smith Chair in Law, and his long and
13 mutually fruitful relationship with the university was to
14 profoundly affect the many students who benefited from his
15 extensive knowledge and genuine investment in their education;
16 shortly before his death, he was voted Outstanding Faculty Member
17 for 2004-2005 by the UT Student Bar Association; and

18 WHEREAS, Dr. Dawson's lasting impact on Texas law derives not
19 only from those students whose development he helped to guide but
20 also from his drafting of the state's juvenile justice statutes in
21 1973 and their 1995 revision, which produced an influential body of
22 law that focused on rehabilitating young offenders and made the
23 state's juvenile justice system a model for other states to follow;
24 a renowned expert on juvenile law, he served as the juvenile law

1 editor of the State Bar of Texas Family Law Section Newsletter from
2 1967 until 1987, when the Juvenile Law Section of the State Bar was
3 created, and he became editor of the State Bar of Texas Juvenile Law
4 Section Newsletter; moreover, he authored and coauthored numerous
5 publications on criminal procedure and juvenile law and shared his
6 expertise with probation officers and attorneys throughout the
7 state; and

8 WHEREAS, His real-world experience with criminal law imbued
9 him with a keen understanding of the legal system's effect on the
10 lives of average people, and he sought to ground his students in a
11 practical awareness of the law's workings by cofounding The
12 University of Texas Law School Criminal Defense Clinic, which he
13 led as director for 24 years; in that capacity, he and his fellow
14 supervisors worked with more than 1,200 third-year law students in
15 handling over 7,200 criminal defendants' cases; and

16 WHEREAS, Dr. Dawson was also instrumental in founding the
17 school's Actual Innocence Clinic, enabling law students to screen
18 and assist inmates who were wrongly convicted, and the clinic's
19 groundbreaking work was recognized with a Public Interest Award
20 from the Texas Law Fellowships in February 2005; and

21 WHEREAS, An avid horseman, he was one of the nation's leading
22 experts on equine law and taught a class on the subject with his
23 wife, Jan; appropriately, Dr. Dawson's ashes will be mixed with old
24 horse stall bedding and scattered on the farm that he and his wife
25 shared, which he noted would serve to enrich the hay crop; and

26 WHEREAS, This unique request is a highly appropriate
27 conclusion to Dr. Dawson's life, both in its gentle

1 unpretentiousness and in its humble acknowledgment that the fruits
2 of our labors continue to nourish the world long after we have left
3 it; now, therefore, be it

4 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 79th Texas
5 Legislature hereby honor the life of Dr. Robert O. Dawson and extend
6 sincere sympathy to the members of his family: to his wife, Jan
7 Dawson; to his daughters, Katherine Irene Dawson and Julie Ann
8 Gerrow; to his brother, William Dawson; to his niece, Diana Dawson;
9 to his nephew, Greg Dawson; and to his other family members and many
10 friends; and, be it further

11 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
12 prepared for the members of his family and that when the Texas House
13 of Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of
14 Professor Robert O. Dawson.