

By: Dukes

H.R. No. 1006

R E S O L U T I O N

1           WHEREAS, A leader in education, civil rights, and civic  
2 service, Bertha Elizabeth Sadler Means has contributed greatly to  
3 the Austin community since her arrival in the Capital City in 1939;  
4 and

5           WHEREAS, A former president of the local chapter of Jack and  
6 Jill of America, Incorporated, Mrs. Means helped to found this  
7 vital organization in June 1953; in keeping with the mission of its  
8 parent organization, the Austin chapter dedicates its resources to  
9 providing constructive educational, cultural, civic, recreational,  
10 social, and service programs for children as well as to raising  
11 community awareness for children's needs and concerns; and

12           WHEREAS, Her outstanding work with Jack and Jill represents  
13 only one of this esteemed Texan's innumerable civic involvements  
14 and professional accomplishments; after graduating with a degree in  
15 English and education from Huston-Tillotson College, Mrs. Means  
16 taught at Austin area schools for a number of years; in 1955, she  
17 earned a master's degree in educational psychology at The  
18 University of Texas at Austin and later held several positions with  
19 the Austin Independent School District in the areas of elementary  
20 and secondary education; she also distinguished herself as a  
21 director of Head Start and the first coordinator for reading  
22 instruction in the city's junior and senior high schools; today,  
23 Mrs. Means is a successful businesswoman, serving as chief  
24 executive officer of the family-owned Austin Cab Company; and

1           WHEREAS, Despite the demands of her professional career, Mrs.  
2 Means has always found time to give back to the community; she has  
3 been associated with the International Hospitality Council of  
4 Austin since its founding in 1959; a former vice president of the  
5 American Association of University Women, she was also a founding  
6 member of St. James' Episcopal Church in 1941 and has been an active  
7 congregant ever since; moreover, she has served as area chair of the  
8 United Fund of Austin and Travis County; and

9           WHEREAS, In the 1950s and 1960s, Mrs. Means was deeply  
10 involved in civil rights issues and made it her mission to break  
11 down the racial barriers that existed in Austin at the time; in  
12 addition to her service as vice president of the Austin Branch of  
13 the NAACP and chair of its Voter Registration Projects, she helped  
14 create the Mothers Action Council in response to her children and  
15 others being turned away at a local skating rink because of their  
16 color; as chair of the council's Direct Action Committee, Mrs.  
17 Means organized peaceful demonstrations at businesses that had a  
18 history of segregation, and those sit-ins and stand-ins resulted in  
19 the integration of area public facilities and eventually led to the  
20 creation of the Human Relations Department of the City of Austin;  
21 and

22           WHEREAS, Mrs. Means also had a direct role in the integration  
23 of athletics at The University of Texas at Austin; when her son,  
24 James H. Means, Jr., was denied participation in athletics at UT  
25 because of segregation, she called attention to the matter with a  
26 member of the board of regents; a subsequent investigation led to  
27 the integration of the school's athletics program, and her son,

1 James, became the first African American to letter at UT and the  
2 first to participate in the Southwest Conference; moreover, she  
3 played a leading role in the integration of St. Stephen's Episcopal  
4 School and her daughter, Patricia, was the first African American  
5 to graduate from that prestigious Austin school in 1966; and

6 WHEREAS, From 1963 to 1974, she was an Austin City Council  
7 appointee to the Parks and Recreation Board; in that capacity, she  
8 worked toward the improvement of parks in East Austin and her  
9 initiative led to the construction of Givens Recreation Center; and

10 WHEREAS, Over the years, Mrs. Means has been the deserving  
11 recipient of numerous honors and awards, including the Joe W. Neal  
12 Award presented by the International Hospitality Council of Austin  
13 in 2004 for outstanding leadership in international relations and  
14 the YWCA Woman of the Year award in 2004 for community service; she  
15 has also received a Doctor of Humane Letters honorary degree from  
16 Huston-Tillotson College and was inducted into her alma mater's  
17 first Annual Hall of Honors; and

18 WHEREAS, Throughout her life, Bertha Means has given freely  
19 of her time and talents to benefit others, and her actions have  
20 truly had a profound impact on the lives of countless Texans; now,  
21 therefore, be it

22 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 79th Texas  
23 Legislature hereby commend Bertha Elizabeth Sadler Means for her  
24 outstanding work with the Austin chapter of Jack and Jill of  
25 America, Incorporated, and honor her for her lifelong contributions  
26 to the city of Austin and the State of Texas; and, be it further

27 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be

H.R. No. 1006

1 prepared for Mrs. Means as an expression of high regard by the Texas  
2 House of Representatives.