

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 314

In Memory  
of  
Robert O. Dawson

**WHEREAS**, The Senate of the State of Texas joins the citizens of Austin and the Fentress community in mourning the loss of Robert O. Dawson, who died February 26, 2005, at the age of 65; and

**WHEREAS**, A beloved longtime law professor, Robert Dawson held the Bryant Smith Chair in Law at The University of Texas School of Law, where he taught for 37 years and was known to his students as "Mad Dog Dawson"; he was renowned both as a scholar and a reformer and wrote extensively on criminal practice and procedure and juvenile law, with a particular emphasis on Texas law; he is credited with designing a comprehensive, progressive juvenile justice system in Texas that became a model for the rest of the United States; and

**WHEREAS**, He was born in Saint Louis, Missouri, to L. M. and Thelma Dawson and grew up in Vandalia, Missouri; he graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1960 and attended Washington University School of Law with the intention of becoming a criminal lawyer; a criminal law research assignment led to his decision to teach law, and later, to the law casebook series he coauthored; and

**WHEREAS**, In 1974, he formed the highly acclaimed Criminal Defense Clinic at the law school and served as its director until 1998; more recently, he founded and was codirector of the Actual Innocence Clinic, where students learn to investigate claims of innocence by convicted prisoners; and

**WHEREAS**, For his innovative work at the Actual Innocence Clinic, Professor Dawson, along with his coinstructors and students, received the 2005 Public Interest Award from the Texas Law Fellowships; he was also recently honored by the University of Texas law students who elected him the Student Bar Association's Outstanding Faculty Member for 2004-2005; and

**WHEREAS**, He wrote or coauthored many books, including *Texas Criminal Practice and Procedure*, *Texas Juvenile Law*, *Criminal Justice Administration*, and *The Juvenile Justice Process*; and

**WHEREAS**, He was nationally recognized as an expert on equine law, an interest he shared with his wife, attorney and horsemanship safety expert Jan Dawson; together they ran the American Association for Horsemanship Safety; and

**WHEREAS**, The way he handled the adversity in his life is characteristic of the way he lived his life--with courage and

grace; he was a dearly loved and highly respected law professor, colleague, and friend, and he will be deeply missed; and

**WHEREAS**, Robert Dawson lived life to the fullest and was a devoted husband and father, and he leaves behind memories that will be treasured forever by his family and many friends; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 79th Legislature, hereby extend sincere condolences to the bereaved family of Robert O. Dawson: his wife, Jan Dawson; his daughters, Katherine Irene Dawson and Julie Ann Gerrow; his brother, William Dawson; his niece, Diana Dawson; and his nephew, Greg Dawson; and, be it further

**RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be prepared for his family as an expression of deepest sympathy from the Texas Senate, and that when the Senate adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Robert Dawson.

Ellis

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President of the Senate

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Senate on March 7, 2005, by a rising vote.

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Secretary of the Senate

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Member, Texas Senate