

By: Gallego

H.C.R. No. 23

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, A Texas star has forever dimmed with the passing of
2 the Honorable Ann Richards, 45th governor of Texas, on September
3 13, 2006, at the age of 73; and

4 WHEREAS, Governor Richards once explained a profound lesson
5 she had learned early in life: "that people liked you better if you
6 made them laugh"; it was a truth that Ann Richards never ignored,
7 and her engaging wit and charismatic presence, accompanied by a
8 razor-sharp intellect, made her into a groundbreaking politician;
9 just the second female chief executive in the state's history and
10 the first since the 1930s, Governor Richards achieved prominence on
11 both the state and national levels as a role model and outspoken
12 advocate for women and other underrepresented groups seeking a
13 voice in government affairs; and

14 WHEREAS, Born Dorothy Ann Willis on September 1, 1933, she
15 was the daughter of Cecil and Ona Willis and grew up in the Waco
16 area, first in the town of Lakeview and later in Waco itself; her
17 abilities as a public speaker and her interest in politics emerged
18 during her years at Waco High School; she became state debate
19 champion during her senior year and took part in Girl's State, a
20 mock-government assembly of Texas female students, at which she was
21 elected lieutenant governor; and

22 WHEREAS, Governor Richards married while a student at Baylor
23 University, where she earned her degree on a debate scholarship;
24 together with her husband, she raised four children and lived in a

1 succession of cities over the following two decades, including
2 Washington, D.C., Dallas, and Austin, and she went on to earn a
3 teaching certificate and to work as a middle-school educator; she
4 was also active in Democratic party politics, helping found the
5 North Dallas Democratic Women and assisting in several
6 gubernatorial and senate campaigns; her first intensive
7 involvement in government affairs occurred in the early 1970s, when
8 she helped direct the campaign that elected Sarah Weddington to the
9 Texas House of Representatives, and she later served as Ms.
10 Weddington's administrative assistant; and

11 WHEREAS, Opting to become a candidate herself, Ann Richards
12 was elected to the Travis County Commissioners Court in 1976,
13 becoming its first female member, and she was reelected four years
14 later; in 1982, she sought election as state treasurer and became
15 the first woman to win a statewide office in Texas in 50 years;
16 during her two terms as treasurer, she oversaw the modernization of
17 the department's technological processes, increased state revenue,
18 and proved that a woman could excel in the highest levels of state
19 government; and

20 WHEREAS, Already a well-known figure in Texas, she stepped
21 into the national spotlight by delivering a rousing keynote address
22 at the 1988 Democratic National Convention in Atlanta; building on
23 this momentum, she entered the Texas governor's race in 1990, and
24 after a hard-fought campaign, she became the state's chief
25 executive, proclaiming her inauguration as "the first day of the
26 new Texas"; and

27 WHEREAS, In the four years she spent in the Governor's

1 Mansion, Ann Richards undertook a wide range of important
2 initiatives, including changes to school financing, government
3 oversight, insurance regulation, prison construction, and criminal
4 sentencing; moreover, in making appointments to state boards and
5 commissions, she chose a large number of talented women and
6 minorities, following through on her campaign promise to make Texas
7 government more representative of the state's population; and

8 WHEREAS, Her tenure as governor came to an end in 1995, but
9 she remained an important and beloved figure in Texas and
10 throughout the country, and her jokes and insights were on full
11 display during her many speaking engagements; in her professional
12 endeavors, she became a senior advisor to a Washington law firm and
13 worked for Public Strategies, Inc., a public relations and
14 marketing firm; a devoted civic activist, she was involved with
15 charitable institutions such as the Save the Children Federation
16 and helped develop the Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders,
17 a public school that will open in Austin in 2007 and provide
18 leadership training for young women, including many from
19 economically disadvantaged families; and

20 WHEREAS, Commenting on the legacy she would leave behind,
21 Governor Richards once stated that "I'd like them to remember me by
22 saying, 'She opened government to everyone'"; that noble principle
23 will certainly be among the hallmarks of this remarkable Texan, as
24 will her efforts to improve the lives of the state's residents; with
25 her endearing humor and magnetic personality, she carried forth
26 these ideals, and her career will stand as an enduring example of
27 inspired public service that had an enormous influence on the State

1 of Texas and far beyond the borders of the Lone Star State; now,
2 therefore, be it

3 RESOLVED, That the 80th Legislature of the State of Texas
4 hereby pay special tribute to the life of Ann Richards and that
5 deepest condolences be paid to the members of her family: to her
6 four children, Cecile, Daniel, Clark, and Ellen, and their spouses,
7 to her eight grandchildren, and to the many people across the nation
8 she made extremely proud to call Texas home; and, be it further

9 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
10 prepared for the members of her family and that when the Texas House
11 of Representatives and Senate adjourn this day, they do so in memory
12 of Governor Ann Richards.