

By: Martinez Fischer

H.C.R. No. 59

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, A visionary military and business leader who helped
2 guide the development of San Antonio for more than 30 years,
3 Brigadier General Robert F. McDermott passed away on August 28,
4 2006; and

5 WHEREAS, Born in Boston on July 31, 1920, Robert Francis
6 McDermott entered the United States Military Academy at West Point
7 and graduated in 1943 in the midst of World War II; joining the U.S.
8 Army Air Forces in Europe, he flew 61 combat missions as a fighter
9 pilot, and, when the war concluded, he was appointed to the staff of
10 General Dwight D. Eisenhower; for his distinguished service to his
11 nation, he was awarded the Bronze Star, the Air Medal with five Oak
12 Leaf Clusters, the European Theater of Operations Ribbon, the
13 Distinguished Service Medal, and the Legion of Merit; and

14 WHEREAS, General McDermott, often known simply as "McD," next
15 focused on training other military leaders; after teaching at West
16 Point, he was appointed to the faculty of the newly established
17 United States Air Force Academy in 1954, becoming its first
18 permanent professor in 1957 and its permanent dean of the faculty in
19 1959; often called the father of modern military education, he
20 implemented pioneering innovations at the academy that were soon
21 emulated by other military schools; and

22 WHEREAS, On his retirement from the air force in 1968,
23 General McDermott became chair and chief executive officer for the
24 United Services Automobile Association and brought his family to

1 San Antonio; employing his well-honed leadership skills and the
2 expertise he had gained from Harvard University's graduate program
3 in business administration, which he had completed in 1950, General
4 McDermott transformed USAA into a large and profitable insurance
5 and diversified financial services company; beginning with 2,600
6 employees and \$200 million dollars in assets, he guided USAA into a
7 \$30-billion business with a workforce of 16,000; heading one of the
8 top auto underwriters in the country, the general became a powerful
9 advocate for greater motor vehicle safety, championing air bags
10 long before they became a standard feature in cars; at the same time
11 that he urged his workforce to improve customer service, he made
12 sure that the company adequately served the employees by providing
13 advanced training, educational opportunities, flexible schedules,
14 and child care; under his watch, USAA became a leader in minority
15 hiring and promotion, setting an example that was followed by other
16 San Antonio firms; and

17 WHEREAS, His influence on the business community of his
18 adopted hometown was reflected in many other ways, as well; after
19 becoming chair of the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce in
20 1974, he founded and chaired the San Antonio Economic Development
21 Foundation, which is credited with creating nearly 70,000 new jobs
22 and attracting 280 companies to the city, including Toyota and
23 Southwestern Bell; General McDermott was also the primary force
24 behind the creation of the Texas Research and Technology Foundation
25 and Texas Research Park, which has made San Antonio an important
26 center for the biotechnology industry; and

27 WHEREAS, A man of tremendous energy, General McDermott was

1 also involved in the creation of United San Antonio, a coalition of
2 community, business, and government leaders that focused on social
3 and economic issues, and in the investor group that owned the San
4 Antonio Spurs basketball team, serving as its chair from 1993 to
5 1996; and

6 WHEREAS, General McDermott's many successes earned him a long
7 list of honors, including five honorary doctoral degrees, the
8 Distinguished Graduate Award from the United States Military
9 Academy, the Alumni Achievement Award from Harvard University, and
10 the Golden Plate Award from the American Academy of Achievement, to
11 name but a few; in addition, many buildings, roadways, and academic
12 appointments bear his name, including a San Antonio elementary
13 school, a segment of the I-10 freeway, a clinical science center at
14 The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, the
15 library at the United States Air Force Academy, and academic chairs
16 at both West Point and the Air Force Academy; and

17 WHEREAS, These accolades speak to the epic stature and the
18 monumental accomplishments of Robert F. McDermott, a man of immense
19 and varied abilities who, in sharing his skills, transformed the
20 course of military education in the United States, built an
21 enormously successful insurance company, and played a central role
22 in making his adopted home city of San Antonio into a prosperous
23 metropolis; now, therefore, be it

24 RESOLVED, That the 80th Legislature of the State of Texas
25 hereby pay tribute to the life of Brigadier General Robert Francis
26 McDermott and extend deepest sympathy to the members of his family:
27 to his wife, Marion Slemon "Marnie" McDermott; to his children,

1 Patricia Beynet, Robert F. McDermott, Jr., David W. McDermott,
2 Betsy Gwin, and Mark S. McDermott; to his sisters, Claire Carey,
3 Marguerite Marshall, and Ruth Ahern; to his 14 grandchildren and 12
4 great-grandchildren; and to his other relatives and friends; and,
5 be it further

6 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
7 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of
8 Representatives and Senate adjourn this day, they do so in honor of
9 Brigadier General Robert F. McDermott.