

By: Noriega

H.R. No. 286

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, A pioneering crusader for Hispanic civil rights and
2 one of the first Mexican Americans appointed to a federal district
3 court, the Honorable James DeAnda of Houston passed away on
4 September 7, 2006, after a distinguished legal career that spanned
5 more than a half-century; and

6 WHEREAS, Born in Houston in 1925, James DeAnda was the son of
7 immigrants from Mexico who stressed the importance of education; a
8 1942 graduate of Houston's Jefferson Davis High School, he began
9 college at Texas A&M University but left school to join the Marines
10 during World War II, serving in the Pacific theater and in China; he
11 completed his undergraduate studies after the war, then earned his
12 law degree from The University of Texas at Austin in 1950, becoming
13 one of only a few Hispanic attorneys in the state; and

14 WHEREAS, Judge DeAnda returned to Houston to start his
15 career; he soon became involved in *Hernandez v. Texas*, which proved
16 to be a landmark legal case with far-reaching implications; the
17 appeal of the murder conviction of a Hispanic migrant worker in
18 Jackson County focused on the trial's all-white jury and argued
19 that Latinos had been systematically excluded from the county's
20 juries for decades; in 1954, the United States Supreme Court
21 accepted the argument and overturned the case as a violation of the
22 constitutional guarantee of equal protection; just four years out
23 of law school, James DeAnda had helped bring about a decisive civil
24 rights victory; and

1 WHEREAS, In the years that followed, Judge DeAnda led other
2 efforts to further Mexican American rights; he successfully argued
3 cases that resulted in the desegregation of schools in southeastern
4 Texas, and he joined with others to found the Mexican American Legal
5 Defense and Educational Fund in 1968 and Texas Rural Legal Aid in
6 1970; and

7 WHEREAS, In 1979 President Jimmy Carter appointed him as a
8 federal judge for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District
9 of Texas, making him only the second person of Mexican heritage to
10 sit on the federal bench; Judge DeAnda remained on the court until
11 1992 and was its chief judge for the last four years of his tenure;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, Returning to private practice, he joined the law
14 firm of Solar & Associates in Houston, where he handled civil rights
15 cases; a revered figure among legal scholars and civil rights
16 activists, he received the Distinguished Alumnus Award for
17 Community Service from The University of Texas School of Law Alumni
18 Association in 2004; and

19 WHEREAS, Chief Judge James DeAnda was a courageous advocate
20 who stepped forth to herald a new and more equitable era of social
21 justice in the United States, and he established a monumental
22 legacy of achievement that furthered the rights of Mexican
23 Americans; in so doing, he brought about greater equality for all
24 citizens of the United States; now, therefore, be it

25 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 80th Texas
26 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life of the Honorable James
27 DeAnda and extend deepest condolences to the members of his family:

1 to his wife, Joyce DeAnda; to his son, Lou DeAnda; to his sister,
2 Mary DeAnda; to his brother, Louis DeAnda; to his stepchildren,
3 Kelly Martin, Patrick Martin, and Nikki Greenfield; and to his
4 other relatives and many friends and admirers across the state and
5 nation; and, 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 adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Chief Judge
9 James DeAnda.