

By: Duncan

S.C.R. No. 59

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The Honorable Billy Wayne Clayton, esteemed public servant, statesman, legislative optimist, and friend to many, left this world for the next on January 6, 2007, at the age of 78; and

WHEREAS, Bill Clayton was born in Olney on September 11, 1928, and soon after moved to Springlake, where he grew up on the family farm; he met and married his beloved wife of 56 years, Delma J. Dennis of Temple; and

WHEREAS, Bill Clayton and his wife were longtime members of the First Baptist Church in Springlake, where he also served as a deacon in the 1960s and 1970s, and he continued his service in the church in various capacities throughout his life; he also worked with the Masonic Lodge and obtained the honored 33rd degree; and

WHEREAS, "Billy Wayne," as he was known to his family and friends, or "Mr. Speaker," as he was called by those who wanted to be more formal, was a leading political figure in Texas for over 45 years; after being involved in local politics, Billy Wayne Clayton was elected to the Texas House of Representatives in 1962, where he served until his retirement from the legislature in January 1983; and

WHEREAS, Bill Clayton's colleagues elected him as Speaker in 1975 after a hard-fought and ingenious campaign for that office; he was reelected Speaker by his peers a record-setting four consecutive terms; as Speaker, he was known for his collaborative

1 and friendly style of leadership, reaching into all segments of the
2 membership of the House for input and guidance; and

3 WHEREAS, Speaker Clayton was known as an innovator in state
4 government; as Speaker he created the ability of members to
5 maintain year-round staffs in Austin to serve their constituents;
6 he modernized the committee hearing process and facilities to give
7 the members and the public more opportunities for participation; he
8 empowered all members to have opportunity to have their important
9 legislation scheduled for debate on the floor of the House through
10 the implementation of a "priority number" system; he appointed for
11 the first time in Texas history the first African American chair of
12 a House Committee, the first Hispanic chair, the first woman chair,
13 and the first Republican chair; and

14 WHEREAS, Speaker Clayton took an active leadership role in
15 national governmental organizations and served as chairman of both
16 the Southern Legislative Conference and the Council of State
17 Governments; he also served as president of the Interstate
18 Conference on Water Problems, as president of the Southern States
19 Speakers Conference, which he cofounded, and on the board of
20 directors of the National Conference of State Legislatures; and

21 WHEREAS, While Speaker, Bill Clayton led the fight against
22 wasteful government spending, encouraging his colleagues to pass
23 legislation creating a constitutional rainy day fund for saving
24 surplus money for future use; he created innovative financing
25 techniques for public schools and institutions of higher education;
26 he was instrumental in driving creative legislative compromises to
27 secure needed funds for human services while leading the way for tax

1 reform that benefited all Texans; all this was accomplished with
2 over a billion-dollar surplus at the end of each term during his
3 tenure; and

4 WHEREAS, Speaker Clayton led the House of Representatives
5 with a respect for the dignity of his elected peers and the
6 individual responsibilities and challenges each faced; he worked
7 tirelessly at the process of governing, which he truly loved; he
8 fervently believed in the spirit of compromise, the power of
9 diversity, and the importance of collegiality, and these leadership
10 strengths created bipartisan cooperation in the Texas House of
11 Representatives; he appointed the Public Servants Standards of
12 Conduct Advisory Committee, recommending a standard of conduct and
13 code of ethics for public officials and state employees that
14 ultimately culminated in the creation of the Texas Ethics
15 Commission; because of his untiring devotion to the legislative
16 process, and in particular the House of Representatives, and to the
17 people of Texas, and because of his outstanding legislative record,
18 he is considered a true statesman; and

19 WHEREAS, Bill Clayton's blood ran maroon, not red; he
20 graduated from Texas A&M University with a bachelor of science
21 degree in agricultural economics in 1950; Texas A&M recognized
22 Speaker Clayton in 1979 for outstanding service and named him a
23 distinguished alumnus; in 1988, he served as president of The Texas
24 A&M Association of Former Students; he was appointed by Governor
25 Bill Clements to an unexpired term on the board of regents of The
26 Texas A&M University System in 1988 and reappointed to a full
27 six-year term in 1989; although he was a dedicated Aggie, he also

1 believed in helping out his competitors, and earned an MBA from The
2 University of Texas and was awarded honorary doctor of law degrees
3 from both Texas Tech University and Texas Wesleyan University; and

4 WHEREAS, Mr. Speaker, who spent his life in the public arena,
5 was chosen as one of the "Ten Best Legislators" while serving as
6 Speaker and was selected as one of the "Ten Most Influential
7 Lobbyists" in 1997; he was named in May 2000 to the "History Makers
8 of the High Plains" for the 20th century by the *Amarillo Globe News*
9 and won the "Greatest Texas Statesman" of the 20th century in a web
10 poll conducted in December 1999; in the spring of 2000, a detention
11 center in Littlefield was dedicated and named the Bill Clayton
12 Detention Center of Littlefield; he was the author of two books, *The*
13 *Corporate Executive and Politics* and *Ethics and the Texas House of*
14 *Representatives*, and he and Jimmy Banks coauthored a biography of
15 his political life titled *Gavels, Grit and Glory*; and

16 WHEREAS, Bill Clayton had a Texas-sized heart and would help
17 anyone who crossed his path; he loved his country, his state, his
18 family, and his fellow man and made innumerable contributions to
19 the betterment of the State of Texas through his dedicated public
20 service; although he now resides with his Maker and will be deeply
21 missed, his legacy of achievements will live on; because of his
22 untiring devotion to the legislative process, and in particular to
23 the House of Representatives, and to the people of Texas, and
24 because of his outstanding legislative record, he is considered a
25 true statesman; now, therefore, be it

26 RESOLVED, That the 80th Legislature of the State of Texas
27 hereby pay tribute to the life of the Honorable Billy Wayne Clayton

1 and extend sincere sympathy to his wife, Delma Dennis Clayton; to
2 his two children, Brenda Herrell of Littlefield and Tommy Clayton
3 of Springlake; to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren; and to
4 his other relatives and many friends and admirers; and, be it
5 further

6 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
7 prepared for his family and that when the Texas Senate and House of
8 Representatives adjourn this day, they do so in memory of the
9 Honorable Mr. Speaker Billy Wayne Clayton.