

By: Hughes

H.C.R. No. 31

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1           WHEREAS, A gifted opera singer, Barbara Smith Conrad has been  
2 delighting audiences for the past four decades, achieving worldwide  
3 acclaim and recognition; and

4           WHEREAS, Raised in the East Texas community of Center Point,  
5 Barbara Smith began exploring music as a child; she and her siblings  
6 practiced playing a variety of genres on their family's piano, from  
7 sonatas by Mozart to the gospel hymns they heard at their local  
8 Baptist church; she went on to attend The University of Texas at  
9 Austin, and as a sophomore, she won the lead role in the campus  
10 production of *Dido and Aeneas*; however, in an incident that drew  
11 national attention, Ms. Smith was advised by school administrators  
12 that she could not perform in the opera; despite an offer from actor  
13 Harry Belafonte to underwrite her studies at the institution of her  
14 choice, she chose to remain at the university and earned her  
15 bachelor's degree in music from UT in 1959; and

16           WHEREAS, Pursuing a career as a vocalist in the years that  
17 followed, she took her father's first name, Conrad, and toured with  
18 various opera groups; in 1977, she was cast as Marian Anderson in  
19 the ABC television movie, *Eleanor and Franklin: The White House*  
20 *Years*; she also garnered praise for her work in the Houston Grand  
21 Opera production of *Carmen*, and she became a performer with the  
22 prestigious Metropolitan Opera from 1982 to 1989; this exceptional  
23 mezzo-soprano continued to play leading roles with the Vienna State  
24 Opera, New York City Opera, Teatro Nacional de Venezuela,

1 Pittsburgh Opera, and others throughout the United States, Canada,  
2 Europe, and South America; moreover, she has been accompanied by  
3 such celebrated orchestras as the New York Philharmonic and the  
4 symphonies of London, Boston, Cleveland, and Detroit; and

5 WHEREAS, In 1984, Ms. Conrad returned to her alma mater to  
6 lend her voice for the premiere of *Al-Inkishafi*, and the following  
7 year, she was named a Distinguished Alumnus by the Ex-Students'  
8 Association of The University of Texas; she has also been honored  
9 with invitations to sing at the White House for Lady Bird Johnson's  
10 75th birthday and to perform for Pope John Paul II during his visit  
11 to New York City in 1995; and

12 WHEREAS, Today, among her other pursuits, Ms. Conrad spends  
13 time at her vocal studio in Manhattan and works closely with the  
14 Manhattan School of Music as the cofounder and codirector of its  
15 Wagner Theater Program; she also regularly participates in the  
16 Distinguished Alumnus Awards at UT, where she often sings "The Eyes  
17 of Texas"; fittingly, the university has created an endowed  
18 presidential scholarship in fine arts in Ms. Conrad's name, and in  
19 2005, the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at UT announced  
20 the Endowment for the Study of the American Spiritual, for which Ms.  
21 Conrad serves as the national ambassador; she released a recording  
22 of spirituals in 1995 with the choir of the Convent Avenue Baptist  
23 Church and remains dedicated to preserving this art form; and

24 WHEREAS, With talent and perseverance, Barbara Smith Conrad  
25 has become a world-renowned mezzo-soprano, and in realizing her  
26 dreams, she is an inspiration to countless individuals; now,  
27 therefore, be it

1           RESOLVED, That the 81st Legislature of the State of Texas  
2 hereby commend Barbara Smith Conrad on her accomplished musical  
3 career and her role in the movement toward civil rights in the  
4 United States of America, and extend to her sincere best wishes for  
5 continued success and happiness; and, be it further

6           RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be  
7 prepared for Ms. Conrad as an expression of high regard by the Texas  
8 House of Representatives and Senate.