

By: Cohen

H.R. No. 1034

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The city of Houston lost an esteemed leader and a
2 dynamic trailblazer with the death of Eleanor Whilden Tinsley on
3 February 10, 2009, at the age of 82; and

4 WHEREAS, The daughter of W. C. and Georgiabel Whilden, the
5 former Eleanor Whilden was born in Dallas on October 31, 1926; she
6 attended William and Mary College before going on to earn her
7 bachelor's degree from Baylor University; she married a fellow
8 Baylor graduate, James Tinsley, and they moved to Houston in 1953;
9 the devoted couple became the parents of three children and later
10 welcomed seven grandchildren and a great-granddaughter into the
11 family; they shared a rewarding relationship for 59 years until Mr.
12 Tinsley's death in 2007; and

13 WHEREAS, Mrs. Tinsley was active in civic and church affairs
14 as a young mother; deeply committed to racial equality and civil
15 rights, she joined the Citizens for Good Schools slate as a
16 desegregation candidate for the Houston Independent School
17 District, winning election in 1969 and becoming president in 1972;
18 during this turbulent time, she endured vandalism and harassment,
19 but remained true to the causes in which she believed; she was
20 instrumental in making the integration process orderly and
21 peaceful, and in developing the magnet school concept that became a
22 national model; Mrs. Tinsley also led the way in the establishment
23 of the Volunteers in Public School program and the creation of the
24 Houston Community College System; and

1 WHEREAS, Following her school board tenure, Mrs. Tinsley was
2 appointed to the board of the Houston Housing Authority; she became
3 president of Harris County Children's Protective Services and
4 helped found the Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards, serving as
5 its president; in 1979, she became one of the first women elected to
6 citywide political office in Houston and during her 16 years in
7 office, she initiated important legislation dealing with
8 anti-crime measures, city administration, urban planning, and
9 economic development; and

10 WHEREAS, This petite, elegant woman possessed enormous
11 reserves of both charm and resolve; adopting the turtle as her
12 symbol, she proclaimed that only people who stick their necks out
13 get things done; she radically altered the way the city served its
14 citizens and she improved quality of life by fighting to ban indoor
15 smoking, restrict the proliferation of unsightly billboards,
16 establish the 9-1-1 emergency network, organize the mounted patrol,
17 and establish the READ Commission for adult literacy; in 1983, she
18 created the SPARK School Park Program to develop public school
19 grounds into neighborhood parks; and

20 WHEREAS, After leaving public office, Mrs. Tinsley continued
21 to work in behalf of SPARK, which has won numerous local, state, and
22 national awards; through the years, she participated in many
23 community organizations and served on the boards of Planned
24 Parenthood, the Baylor Alumni Association, and the Baptist General
25 Convention of Texas; in addition, she volunteered in political
26 campaigns, most recently supporting President Barack Obama from the
27 very beginning of his campaign for the Democratic nomination; and

1 WHEREAS, The city of Houston named both a downtown park and an
2 elementary school in Mrs. Tinsley's honor; she was elected to the
3 Texas Women's Hall of Fame and was named a distinguished alumna by
4 Baylor University; the *Houston Post* listed her as one of
5 "Twenty-five People Who Changed Houston," and among countless other
6 accolades, she received the Institute of Rehabilitation and
7 Research President's Award for her efforts in behalf of people with
8 disabilities; in January 2009, Planned Parenthood inducted her into
9 the prestigious Margaret Sanger Circle; and

10 WHEREAS, Eleanor Tinsley helped make the Houston political
11 system more open and representative of its diverse population, and
12 was a tireless champion for civil and human rights and civic
13 improvement; through her vision and tenacity, she has left Houston
14 a safer and a more livable and tolerant city; now, therefore, be it

15 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 81st Texas
16 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life of Eleanor Whilden
17 Tinsley and extend sincere sympathy to the members of her family: to
18 her daughters, Kathleen Ownby and her husband, David, and Marilyn
19 Daniel and her husband, B. D.; to her son, Tom Tinsley, and his
20 wife, Cathy; to her grandchildren, Dan Ownby and his wife, Allison,
21 Emily Elliott and her husband, Brooks, Bethany Mateosian and her
22 husband, Sam, James and Claire Tinsley, and Angela and Bill Daniel;
23 to her great-granddaughter, Lucy Elliott; to her brother, Walter
24 Whilden, and his wife, Jennie; to her sister-in-law, Dorothy
25 Whilden; and to her other relatives and friends; and, be it further

26 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
27 prepared for her family and that when the Texas House of

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1 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Eleanor
2 Tinsley.