

By: Alonzo

H.R. No. 1203

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, Edith O'Donnell of Dallas has been named the 2009
2 Texas Medal of Arts honoree for Individual Arts Patron by the Texas
3 Cultural Trust; and

4 WHEREAS, A graduate of The University of Texas at Austin,
5 Mrs. O'Donnell has been a civic leader and philanthropist for more
6 than five decades, and has demonstrated selfless devotion to the
7 arts, giving unstintingly of her time, expertise, and financial
8 resources; she serves on the advisory board of The University of
9 Texas College of Fine Arts and on the board and the education
10 committee of the Dallas Museum of Art, and previously served a
11 six-year term on the Texas Commission on the Arts; and

12 WHEREAS, In 1987, Mrs. O'Donnell co-founded a Greater Dallas
13 chapter of Young Audiences, believing firmly in the power of the
14 arts to help children learn; she continues to serve on the board of
15 this dynamic organization, which changed its name to Big Thought as
16 it expanded beyond its original arts-in-education mission; through
17 the years, Big Thought has supported educational opportunities for
18 more than 5 million children and more than 6,000 teachers, and has
19 sponsored over 19,000 performances and 124,000 workshops and
20 residencies; its initiatives address academic achievement, family
21 services, and life skills and workforce development, and its
22 programs reach children in neighborhood and after-school settings
23 and in juvenile detention centers, as well as in the classroom; the
24 Wallace Foundation recently acknowledged the effectiveness of Big

1 Thought with an \$8 million grant; and

2 WHEREAS, This tireless advocate for the arts also created an
3 Advanced Placement arts program, which has reached more than 8,000
4 arts and music students over the past 15 years; its courses have
5 helped build critical thinking, creativity, and other essential
6 skills, and its graduating seniors earn some \$10 million in
7 scholarships annually; with the support of the O'Donnell
8 Foundation, young artists are given the opportunity to compete in a
9 juried show, the Young Masters Exhibition; and

10 WHEREAS, Mrs. O'Donnell's many other cultural activities
11 include her service as a member of the original board of the Friends
12 of the Governor's Mansion of Texas and as a life trustee of the
13 Hockaday School; she is secretary/treasurer of the O'Donnell
14 Foundation, which she and her husband, Peter O'Donnell, Jr.,
15 established in 1957; this charitable organization works to
16 strengthen math, science, and engineering programs and supports
17 Advanced Placement and higher education programs in the arts; most
18 of its grants benefit public institutions in Texas; and

19 WHEREAS, Mr. and Mrs. O'Donnell have been honored with the
20 James K. Wilson Award and the Linz Award, and they became the first
21 couple in the history of Southern Methodist University to receive
22 honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degrees together; in 2008,
23 Communities Foundation of Texas partnered with the Morton H.
24 Meyerson Family Tzedakah Fund to inaugurate the O'Donnell Texas AP
25 Teacher Award, which provides substantial cash prizes to educators;
26 and

27 WHEREAS, Edith O'Donnell has long played a pivotal role in

1 the arts community and in arts education in Texas, and her
2 generosity and selfless dedication have increased opportunities
3 for others and enriched countless lives; now, therefore, be it

4 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 81st Texas
5 Legislature hereby congratulate Edith O'Donnell on being named the
6 2009 Texas Medal of Arts honoree for Individual Arts Patron by the
7 Texas Cultural Trust and extend to her sincere appreciation for her
8 unwavering commitment to the arts; and, be it further

9 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
10 prepared for Mrs. O'Donnell as an expression of high regard by the
11 Texas House of Representatives.