

By: Hunter

H.R. No. 142

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, A full and generous life came to an end with the  
2 passing of Dr. Billy Jim "Doc" Blankenship of Corpus Christi, who  
3 died on October 22, 2010, at the age of 82; and

4 WHEREAS, A fifth-generation Texan, Billy J. Blankenship was  
5 born in Longview on February 13, 1928, to John Oscar and Jimmie  
6 Sunshine Blankenship; he grew up in Mineola, where he was a member  
7 of the Boy Scouts and lettered in track and football; he  
8 demonstrated his extraordinary spirit at an early age, as he  
9 rescued an elderly woman from her burning house and was recommended  
10 for a Carnegie Medal for Heroism; and

11 WHEREAS, After graduating from Polytechnic High School in  
12 Fort Worth at the age of 16, Mr. Blankenship entered North Texas  
13 Agricultural College and joined the Reserve Officers' Training  
14 Corps; he enlisted in the U.S. Merchant Marine at 17, and a year  
15 later transferred to the U.S. Navy, serving in the Pacific for two  
16 years; after his military service, he returned to the merchant  
17 marine, sailing around the world five times before the age of 21;  
18 and

19 WHEREAS, In 1951, Mr. Blankenship resumed his education,  
20 earning two bachelor's degrees and a master's degree from Stephen F.  
21 Austin State College; during his college years, he was joined in  
22 matrimony to the former Carolyn Keeling, and they enjoyed a  
23 fulfilling relationship that endured until his death and were the  
24 parents of three daughters, Roberta, Jimmie, and Jean; and

1           WHEREAS, Dr. Blankenship received his dental degree from The  
2 University of Texas Dental Branch in Houston in 1958, and in 1963 he  
3 earned his medical degree from The University of Texas Medical  
4 Branch in Galveston, with a specialty in oral and maxillofacial  
5 surgery; during the course of a long and successful career, he  
6 worked on the staffs of 40 hospitals and published 150 scientific  
7 articles; he taught full-time and part-time for a total of 21 years,  
8 and he retired as a professor of surgery from The University of  
9 Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio; and

10           WHEREAS, This patriotic American dedicated much of his life  
11 to his work as a military doctor, starting with service as a dental  
12 officer with the U.S. Naval Reserve and the U.S. Marine Corps  
13 Reserve; he later became a battalion surgeon for the USMCR, and in  
14 1966 he volunteered for service in Vietnam, where he was wounded in  
15 combat; after working as a flight surgeon for the U.S. Air Force  
16 Reserve, he returned to active duty in the navy in 1974, serving as  
17 medical officer on submarines, division surgeon for the Marines on  
18 Okinawa, director of clinical services at the Naval Hospital in  
19 Corpus Christi, and senior naval medical officer with the European  
20 Command of the U.S. Army, among other postings; he retired from the  
21 navy at the rank of captain; and

22           WHEREAS, Dr. Blankenship's outstanding service to his  
23 country was recognized with 55 military decorations, including the  
24 Purple Heart, the Legion of Merit, and the Navy and Marine Corps  
25 Medal; he was also the recipient of a certificate of appreciation  
26 from the U.S. Department of State, a postdoctoral fellowship from  
27 the U.S. Public Health Service, and a certificate of humanitarian

1 service from the American Heart Association; and

2 WHEREAS, This dynamic individual also found time to  
3 participate in a number of commercial enterprises over the years,  
4 including farming and ranching, the oil and gas industry, real  
5 estate, and the restaurant business, among many others; he was a  
6 trained pilot, deep-sea diver, and parachutist, and he visited all  
7 50 states and 90 foreign countries, including three tours as a  
8 medical missionary in Central America; in retirement, he became a  
9 beloved member of the Padre Island community; and

10 WHEREAS, "Doc" Blankenship lived a life of high adventure and  
11 extraordinary achievement, and throughout all his travels, he  
12 dedicated himself to the relief of suffering and the service of his  
13 nation, enjoying the love and support of his family and earning the  
14 deep and lasting respect of all who knew him; now, therefore, be it

15 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 82nd Texas  
16 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life of Dr. Billy Jim  
17 Blankenship and extend sincere condolences to the members of his  
18 family: to his wife of 58 years, Carolyn Blankenship; to his  
19 daughters, Roberta Soward and her husband, Fred, and Jean Ann  
20 Paluseo and her husband, Jeff; to his grandchildren, Jackson  
21 Soward, Cassidy Soward, Jayden Paluseo, Journey Paluseo, and Jazlyn  
22 Paluseo; and to his other relatives and friends; and, be it further

23 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be  
24 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of  
25 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Dr. Billy  
26 Jim Blankenship.