

By: Dukes

H.R. No. 414

R E S O L U T I O N

1           WHEREAS, February 21, 2011, marked the 75th anniversary of  
2 the birth of the Honorable Barbara Jordan; the legacy that she  
3 established in her service to the citizens of Texas and the United  
4 States of America remains a source of inspiration to countless  
5 people, and time cannot diminish the contributions of this  
6 admirable patriot, politician, teacher, mentor, friend, icon, and  
7 hero; and

8           WHEREAS, Born in 1936 to Benjamin and Arlyne Jordan, Barbara  
9 Jordan was raised in Houston's Fifth Ward and graduated with honors  
10 from Phillis Wheatley High School in the Houston Independent School  
11 District; and

12           WHEREAS, Ms. Jordan attended Texas Southern University,  
13 where she majored in government and history and was a member of the  
14 debate team, winning numerous honors for her oratory skills; after  
15 graduating magna cum laude from TSU, she enrolled at the Boston  
16 University School of Law and received her law degree in 1959; and

17           WHEREAS, In 1966, Ms. Jordan became the first black woman  
18 ever elected to the Texas Senate as well as the first African  
19 American to be elected as a state senator in the United States since  
20 1883; and

21           WHEREAS, Following her successful run for a seat in the U.S.  
22 Congress in 1972, Ms. Jordan served in the House of Representatives  
23 from 1973 until 1979, during which time she enhanced her reputation  
24 as an evocative public speaker and arose as a leader on issues

1 relating to voting rights, consumer protection, energy, and the  
2 environment; and

3 WHEREAS, In her role as a member of the House Committee on the  
4 Judiciary, she gained national prominence during the Watergate  
5 impeachment proceedings against President Nixon in 1974; speaking  
6 before the committee, she movingly portrayed the intention of the  
7 framers of the U.S. Constitution and eloquently expressed her faith  
8 in that document, even as she noted that "We the People," the first  
9 words of the preamble to the Constitution, were not originally  
10 intended to apply to African Americans; and

11 WHEREAS, In 1976, Congresswoman Jordan became the first  
12 female and the first African American to serve as the keynote  
13 speaker at the Democratic National Convention, and her speech  
14 reiterated her faith in the Constitution and the desire to form a  
15 national community that would fulfill the country's purpose of  
16 creating and sustaining a society in which all are equal; and

17 WHEREAS, Ms. Jordan retired from elective office in 1979 and  
18 became a distinguished professor at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of  
19 Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin; for the  
20 remainder of her life, she focused on mentoring a new generation of  
21 aspiring leaders, encouraging them to excel and to commit  
22 themselves to public service; and

23 WHEREAS, At the request of President Bill Clinton, she became  
24 chair of the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform in the mid-1990s  
25 and held that office until her death; in 1994, President Clinton  
26 honored her for her patriotism and outstanding service by awarding  
27 her the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the country's highest

1 civilian honor; and

2 WHEREAS, Barbara Jordan passed away in January 1996, but her  
3 lifelong commitment to freedom, integrity, equality, and justice  
4 resonates as powerfully today as it did in years past, and her  
5 tireless efforts to champion our nation's highest ideals are indeed  
6 deserving of our recognition and respect; now, therefore, be it

7 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 82nd Texas  
8 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life of Barbara Jordan in  
9 honor of the 75th anniversary of her birth.