

By: Dutton

H.R. No. 1074

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The life of one of professional football's greatest  
2 players of the 1950s drew to a close with the passing of Ollie  
3 Matson on February 19, 2011, at the age of 80; and

4 WHEREAS, Ollie Genoa Matson II was born in Trinity on May 1,  
5 1930; when he was 14, his family moved to San Francisco, where he  
6 graduated from George Washington High School; after initially  
7 studying at City College of San Francisco, he enrolled at the  
8 University of San Francisco and played on the Dons football team  
9 while earning a bachelor's degree in history; and

10 WHEREAS, With his speed and size, Mr. Matson quickly proved  
11 himself a player of rare ability who excelled as both a running back  
12 and a defensive back; sadly, he often found himself battling racism  
13 and segregation as a result of being one of only two African  
14 Americans on the integrated University of San Francisco team; in a  
15 1949 incident, the University of Tulsa made an unsuccessful attempt  
16 to prevent USF's black players from appearing in a game, and when  
17 Mr. Matson took the field that day, he was subjected to illegal hits  
18 and had each of his three touchdowns nullified by penalties; and

19 WHEREAS, In 1951, his senior season, Mr. Matson led the  
20 nation in rushing and touchdowns and was named an all-American; the  
21 Dons established a perfect 9-0 record and should have attracted  
22 attention from the major bowl games, but the Orange, Sugar, and  
23 Gator Bowl committees would not consider inviting an integrated  
24 team; when the USF coach asked the team if they wanted to remove

1 from the roster Mr. Matson and Burl Toler, their other African  
2 American player, in order to gain an invitation to the Orange Bowl,  
3 the players steadfastly refused, and the Dons did not play in a bowl  
4 contest; and

5 WHEREAS, A versatile athlete, Mr. Matson competed in the  
6 United States Olympic trials in 1948 and earned a place on the U.S.  
7 team in 1952; he took part in the Summer Games in Helsinki that  
8 year, winning a bronze medal in the 400-meter dash and a silver in  
9 the 400-meter relay; and

10 WHEREAS, The Chicago Cardinals chose Mr. Matson with the  
11 third pick in the 1952 National Football League draft, and he  
12 embarked on a stellar professional career that spanned 15 seasons,  
13 with a year off for service in the U.S. Army in 1953; he was  
14 co-Rookie of the Year in 1952, was named to the Pro Bowl six times,  
15 and was a first-team all-pro selection five times; he ranked second  
16 in career all-purpose yards at the time of his retirement and set a  
17 record for touchdown runbacks on kicks and punts; such was his  
18 reputation that the Los Angeles Rams traded eight players and a  
19 draft choice to the Cardinals in 1959 in order to bring him to their  
20 team; and

21 WHEREAS, Mr. Matson also played for the Detroit Lions and  
22 Philadelphia Eagles before retiring in 1966; he was elected to the  
23 Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1972 and the National Football  
24 Foundation College Hall of Fame in 1976; after his playing career  
25 ended, he taught physical education and coached football at Los  
26 Angeles High School; he went on to serve as the running backs coach  
27 for San Diego State University and as a scout for the Eagles, and he

1 spent more than a decade as the special events supervisor at the Los  
2 Angeles Memorial Coliseum; and

3 WHEREAS, An exceptional competitor who persevered in the face  
4 of adversity, Ollie Matson earned a place among the legendary  
5 figures of the NFL, and his achievements will be remembered and  
6 celebrated long into the future; now, therefore, be it

7 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 82nd Texas  
8 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the memory of Ollie Matson and  
9 extend sincere condolences to the members of his family: to his  
10 daughters, Lisa Lewis and Barbara King; to his sons, Ollie and Bruce  
11 Matson; to his eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren; to  
12 his sister, Ocie Thompson; and to his other relatives, friends, and  
13 many fans; and, be it further

14 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be  
15 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of  
16 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Ollie  
17 Matson.