

By: Gallego

H.R. No. 1264

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, A life made rich through meaningful service drew to
2 a close when restaurateur, rancher, and activist Benjamin N. Matta
3 of Pecos died on November 4, 2010, at the age of 90; and

4 WHEREAS, Ben Matta was born in Saragosa on April 1, 1920, to
5 Sebestian and Margarita Matta; he learned the value of hard work at
6 an early age, leaving school after the sixth grade; and

7 WHEREAS, In 1939, Mr. Matta was managing a grocery store in
8 Pecos when he started his first restaurant in a house on the corner
9 of Fourth and Walnut Streets; by 1960, Ben's Spanish Inn had moved
10 to its fifth location on West Third Street, seating 450 patrons; the
11 restaurant was known throughout West Texas for its popular chile
12 relleño, and Mr. Matta designed and built a chili roaster that could
13 roast 500 pounds of chilis in an hour; and

14 WHEREAS, Throughout his life, Mr. Matta was a champion for
15 civil rights; in 1943, he refused to accept a seat in the upper
16 balcony of the Grand Theater in Pecos, where Hispanics usually had
17 to sit; from 1949 to 1952, he led a successful campaign to obtain
18 pavement and gutters for the East Pecos neighborhood, and in the
19 early 1950s he helped to stop the segregation of Hispanic students
20 in Pecos schools, despite a boycott of his restaurant; and

21 WHEREAS, Mr. Matta continued to be a leader in his community,
22 serving as a Pecos city councilman, president of the League of
23 United Latin American Citizens, and president of the Pecos
24 Development Association; he was a 20-year member of the Pecos Lions

1 Club, and in 1970 he was named as an Outstanding Director of the
2 Pecos Chamber of Commerce; he attended St. Catherine's Catholic
3 Church; and

4 WHEREAS, In 1978, Mr. Matta retired to his ranch near Fort
5 Davis, where he continued to demonstrate his skill at design and
6 engineering, constructing an irrigation system for his vegetables
7 and fruit trees that used half the water of a traditional system; he
8 relocated to Las Cruces, New Mexico, in 1992 and then returned to
9 Pecos in 1997; and

10 WHEREAS, Mr. Matta was joined in matrimony to the former
11 Jesusita Chuy, and together they were blessed with six children,
12 Ben, Jr., Louis, Jerry, Raymond, Hilda, and Mary; a passionate
13 believer in education, Mr. Matta devoted much of his earnings from
14 his restaurant for many years to sending his children to college;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, Ben Matta lived a full and generous life centered
17 around his family and his community, and his devotion to both will
18 continue to inspire all those who knew and loved him; now,
19 therefore, be it

20 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 82nd Texas
21 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life of Benjamin N. Matta and
22 extend sincere condolences to the members of his family: to his
23 wife, Jesusita Chuy Matta; to his sons, Ben Matta, Jr., Louis Matta,
24 Jerry Matta, and Raymond Matta; to his daughters, Hilda Kershman
25 and Mary Hollopeter; to his brother, Thomas Matta; to his sisters,
26 Elvira Garcia and Maria Matta; to his grandchildren and
27 great-grandchildren; and to his other relatives and friends; and,

1 be it further

2 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
3 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of
4 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Benjamin N.
5 Matta.