

By: Guerra

H.R. No. 963

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, A life dedicated to his state and nation drew to a
2 close with the death of former United States congressman Eligio de
3 la Garza of Mission on March 13, 2017, at the age of 89; and

4 WHEREAS, Born to Dario and Elisa de la Garza in Mercedes on
5 September 22, 1927, "Kika" de la Garza grew up in Mission; he left
6 high school to enlist in the United States Navy in the final months
7 of World War II, and after attending Edinburg Junior College and
8 St. Mary's University, he served his country again during the
9 Korean War as an artillery officer in the army; he completed his law
10 degree at St. Mary's University and in 1952, at the age of 24, he
11 won election to the Texas House of Representatives; and

12 WHEREAS, Mr. de la Garza won reelection five times, and
13 during his tenure, he authored legislation to protect the
14 environment and promote early childhood education; in 1965, he
15 became only the second Hispanic elected to the U.S. Congress from
16 Texas; he was immediately assigned to the Agriculture Committee,
17 and he shepherded major farm bills to passage and served as
18 committee chair for 14 years; moreover, he was a driving force in
19 the development of the nation's first state-run system of
20 English-language instruction for preschool children, and as a
21 steadfast champion of civil rights, he worked tirelessly to broaden
22 access to educational opportunities; he also fought for better
23 living conditions and health care for the most vulnerable,
24 including veterans and the elderly; and

1 WHEREAS, Over the course of 32 years in office, Mr. de la
2 Garza enhanced the lives of his constituents in myriad ways; he
3 played a vital role in the El Morillo Drain project that improved
4 water quality for the entire Rio Grande Valley, and he contributed
5 to economic development through his involvement in the construction
6 of the Falcon and Anzalduas Dams, the Amistad Reservoir, and the
7 Pharr-Reynosa and McAllen-Hidalgo-Reynosa International Bridges;
8 in addition, as an influential proponent of free trade, he helped
9 secure the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement and
10 the expansion of the International General Agreement on Tariffs and
11 Trade; and

12 WHEREAS, A leading expert on U.S.-Mexican relations, Mr. de
13 la Garza was instrumental in building stronger bonds between the
14 nations, and he was the first member of Congress to receive the
15 Order of the Aztec Eagle award, Mexico's highest honor for
16 noncitizens; he was also a founding member and longtime chair of the
17 Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and he earned wide admiration for
18 his ability to work across the aisle to achieve meaningful change;
19 and

20 WHEREAS, Deeply committed to his community, Mr. de la Garza
21 was a member of the McAllen Chamber of Commerce, the Rio Grande
22 Valley Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Museum of South Texas
23 History, the Mission Historical Museum, the Order of the Alhambra
24 Mosara 260, and the Knights of Columbus Council 8298, as well as
25 Catholic War Veterans Post 1065 and American Legion Post 101;
26 numerous streets and public facilities in the Rio Grande Valley and
27 beyond were named in his honor, and he was the recipient of a host of

1 accolades; and

2 WHEREAS, Above all, Mr. de la Garza was devoted to his large
3 extended family; he shared a rewarding marriage of 63 years with his
4 wife, Lucille, and took great pride in their children, Jorge,
5 Michael, and Angela, their grandchildren, Christina, Jorge, Laura,
6 Mariel, Michael, Michelle, Jennifer, and Philip, and their
7 great-grandchild, Jaxon; and

8 WHEREAS, Through his vision, leadership, and dedication to
9 social justice, Kika de la Garza made a tremendous positive impact
10 on the state and nation, and he leaves behind a legacy that will
11 resonate for years to come; now, therefore, be it

12 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 85th Texas
13 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the memory of Eligio "Kika" de la
14 Garza and extend heartfelt sympathy to his family and many friends;
15 and, be it further

16 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be
17 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of
18 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Kika de la
19 Garza.