

By: Davis of Harris

H.R. No. 2252

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The city of Houston lost an admired philanthropist  
2 and businessman with the death of James Lee Ketelsen on April 27,  
3 2017, at the age of 86; and

4 WHEREAS, Born in Davenport, Iowa, on November 14, 1930, Jim  
5 Ketelsen was the son of Ernest and Helen Ketelsen; after graduating  
6 from Northwestern University, he was commissioned as an officer in  
7 the U.S. Navy and served aboard the USS *Hunt* during the Korean War;  
8 he married Joan Velde and they became the parents of a son, James,  
9 and a daughter, Lee; following the death of Mrs. Ketelsen, he was  
10 fortunate to find love a second time with the former Kathryn Lloyd,  
11 and they shared a fulfilling marriage that spanned 29 years; and

12 WHEREAS, Mr. Ketelsen began his career as a CPA in the  
13 Chicago office of Price Waterhouse; in 1959, he was appointed  
14 assistant comptroller of J. I. Case Company, and he rose to become  
15 president when he was only 36 years old; after Case was acquired by  
16 Tenneco, he was named CEO and chair and led the multi-industry  
17 corporation until 1992; he became one of the first business  
18 executives to fully recognize the importance of a healthy workforce  
19 and built a state-of-the-art fitness center for employees;  
20 moreover, he set an example of wellness as an avid runner, and he  
21 initiated Tenneco's sponsorship of the Houston Marathon; and

22 WHEREAS, Deeply committed to the community, Mr. Ketelsen  
23 gave employees paid time off for volunteerism, and he established  
24 Project GRAD, a four-year scholarship program at Davis High School

1 that soon quadrupled its rate of college enrollment; following his  
2 retirement, he and his wife Kathryn built on that success by  
3 expanding Project GRAD to improve college readiness with a set of  
4 comprehensive interventions in earlier grades; he then applied his  
5 business acumen to the task of scaling up the initiative, and it  
6 became an influential model that was adopted across the country;  
7 the Houston Independent School District paid tribute to his efforts  
8 in 2002 by opening James L. Ketelsen Elementary School, where the  
9 children welcomed the frequent visits of their beloved "Mr. K.";  
10 and

11 WHEREAS, Mr. Ketelsen benefited higher education as a regent  
12 of the University of Houston System and a trustee of Northwestern  
13 University; he was a member of the Texas Business and Education  
14 Coalition, the Texas Head Start Collaboration Task Force, and the  
15 State Board of Education Task Force on Early Childhood and  
16 Elementary Education, and he chaired the Texas 2000 State  
17 Coordinating Team; in addition, he helped raise funds to build the  
18 Wortham Theater, and he played a key role in the development of  
19 Sesquicentennial Park; among numerous other leadership roles, he  
20 was a trustee of the Houston Grand Opera Association and the Texas  
21 Heart Institute; he also shared his expertise as a director of such  
22 firms as Sara Lee Corporation, GTE Corporation, and J. P. Morgan &  
23 Company; and

24 WHEREAS, Although Jim Ketelsen's death has brought great  
25 sorrow to his loved ones, his remarkable record of civic engagement  
26 will remain a source of inspiration, and his exceptional  
27 contributions will continue to resonate for years to come; now,

1 therefore, be it

2           RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 85th Texas  
3 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the memory of James Ketelsen and  
4 extend sincere condolences to all who mourn his passing; and, be it  
5 further

6           RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be  
7 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of  
8 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of James  
9 Ketelsen.