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By:  Howard H.R. No. 787

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, The Lone Star State lost an admired lawmaker with the passing of James Arthur Turman, former speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, on February 13, 2019, at the age of 91; and

WHEREAS, Jimmy Turman was born in Fannin County to James Wesley Turman and Clive Scarborough Turman on November 29, 1927, and later worked his way through East Texas State Teachers College, earning bachelor's and master's degrees; he began his career in education when he was only 19 and worked as a teacher and principal in Wolfe City before being hired as a junior high school principal in Paris; after serving with the U.S. Navy during the Korean War, he settled in Gober; and

WHEREAS, This dedicated public servant won election to the first of four terms in the Texas House of Representatives in 1954; he drew on his experience as a teacher and school administrator while serving on the Education Committee, which he chaired during the 55th Legislature, and the School Districts Committee; he also chaired the Municipal and Private Corporations Committee and spent two sessions on the Banks and Banking Committee; during his time as a legislator, he completed his doctoral degree in educational administration and psychology at The University of Texas at Austin, and when he was elected as speaker of the 57th Texas Legislature in 1961, he became the first holder of a doctorate to serve as the chamber's presiding officer; and

WHEREAS, Under the leadership of Speaker Turman, the house chamber was air-conditioned, and he arranged for the allocation of private offices in the Capitol to many rank-and-file members for the first time; he served as chair of the Legislative Audit Committee, established the State Employees Classification System, and promoted passage of a bill supporting the University of Houston; committed to fair remuneration for educators, he secured a teacher pay raise, and he successfully advocated for better wages and more reasonable hours for firefighters as well; in addition, the state's first general sales tax was enacted during his speakership after he forged an agreement with Governor Price Daniel that enabled the bill to become law; his involvement in state politics also included an unsuccessful bid for the office of lieutenant governor in 1962; and

WHEREAS, Speaker Turman began working as an assistant to the president and as an assistant professor at Texas Woman's University in 1957, and during his tenure, he established the TWU Foundation and served as its first director; he went on to join the U.S. Office of Education and rose to become associate commissioner, the highest civil service position in the agency; concurrently, he served on the Education Commission of the States, and President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed him to the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board; he served in subsequent administrations as director of the President's National Advisory Council on Extension and Continuing Education and as a consultant to the President's Council on Physical Fitness; moreover, he shared his expertise as a member of presidential task forces on public school desegregation; and

WHEREAS, During his time in the nation's capital, Speaker Turman founded two national educational management consulting corporations; he later worked as chief of staff for Texas congress member Jim Mattox and as a liaison to the House Budget Committee; in his next role, as regional director of refugee resettlement in Dallas for the Department of Health and Human Services, he helped immigrants from Vietnam and Cambodia make new homes in the U.S. following the fall of Saigon; in 1986, he retired from the civil service and joined the Office of the State Comptroller as a senior research analyst; he organized Chaparral Mining Corporation four years later and held the offices of board chair, president, and CEO with the company; and

WHEREAS, During retirement, Speaker Turman traveled North America in an RV with his beloved wife and best friend, Joanie Turman, visiting all 49 state capitols across the continental U.S.; when not on the road, the couple enjoyed residing near their friend Willie Nelson in the Village of Briarcliff; Speaker Turman was the father of one son, James A. Turman Jr., who preceded him in death; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of this admired Texan's many achievements, the Texas Legislature unanimously designated Farm-to-Market Road 68 in Fannin County as Speaker Jimmy Turman Road in 2005, and he was honored as a Distinguished Alumnus of Texas A&M University-Commerce in 2009; and

WHEREAS, Through his tremendous dedication to the Lone Star State and to public education, Jimmy Turman made a positive difference in the lives of countless people, and his contributions will be remembered and admired for years to come; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 86th Texas Legislature hereby pay tribute to the memory of the Honorable James Arthur Turman and extend sincere condolences to his loved ones: to his wife, Joanie Turman; to his sister, Mary Ann Reagan; to his former brother-in-law, Dr. Billy R. Reagan; and to all who mourn his passing; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Speaker Turman.