

By: Howard

H.R. No. 999

R E S O L U T I O N

1           WHEREAS, Texans lost a tireless champion of higher education  
2 with the death of former University of Texas at Austin president  
3 William C. Powers Jr. on March 10, 2019, at the age of 72; and

4           WHEREAS, A member of the UT School of Law faculty for more  
5 than four decades, Bill Powers took the helm of the university in  
6 2006; he implemented sweeping reform of the undergraduate  
7 curriculum, including the creation of mandatory signature courses  
8 for freshmen, and he guided the establishment of both the School of  
9 Undergraduate Studies and the Dell Medical School, the first new  
10 medical school at a tier one public university in decades; his  
11 commitment to increasing the four-year graduation rate brought a  
12 dramatic improvement, from about 50 percent to nearly 70 percent;  
13 and

14           WHEREAS, Mr. Powers strived to make the university more  
15 efficient and accountable while also raising \$3.1 billion through  
16 his eight-year Campaign for Texas; in addition, he launched the  
17 ESPN-owned Longhorn Network, which is expected to generate \$300  
18 million over 20 years, much of that for the endowment of faculty  
19 chairs; under his leadership, the construction of 13 major  
20 buildings was commenced or completed; he established a vice  
21 presidency to oversee diversity and community engagement, and he  
22 was a stalwart advocate for the use of race and ethnicity as one  
23 factor in admissions, pursuing the *Fisher* affirmative action case  
24 all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court and winning a landmark ruling;

1 moreover, he was a fierce defender of the academic values and  
2 world-changing research that made his institution a "university of  
3 the first class"; he enjoyed a sterling reputation in the higher  
4 education community, and in 2013, he was elected chair of the  
5 Association of American Universities, which represents the top  
6 research universities in the U.S. and Canada; when he stepped down  
7 as UT president two years later, his administration ranked as the  
8 second-longest in UT history; and

9         WHEREAS, Born in Los Angeles in 1946, Mr. Powers was the son  
10 of Mildred Rose Powers and William Charles Powers Sr.; he grew up in  
11 Southern California and earned his bachelor's degree in chemistry  
12 from the University of California, Berkeley; after serving in the  
13 U.S. Navy for three years, he graduated magna cum laude from  
14 Harvard Law School, where he was managing editor of the Harvard Law  
15 Review; he clerked for a judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the  
16 Ninth Circuit and taught at the University of Washington, the  
17 University of Michigan, and Southern Methodist University before  
18 joining the UT Law faculty in 1977; and

19         WHEREAS, Mr. Powers became one of the nation's foremost  
20 experts on torts, and he was appointed by the prestigious American  
21 Law Institute as Reporter for *Restatement (Third) for Torts*, the  
22 most important text for practitioners in that field; his  
23 outstanding work then prompted the ALI to name him the R. Ammi  
24 Cutter Reporter; the author of numerous other articles and books on  
25 tort law and legal philosophy, he was much in demand as a consultant  
26 on a wide range of complex tort cases, and he argued 50 cases before  
27 the Texas Supreme Court; at the same time, his teaching and

1 mentorship influenced generations of attorneys; and

2           WHEREAS, While serving as dean of the law school, Mr. Powers  
3 was appointed to Enron's board of directors to lead an internal  
4 probe of the company's financial dealings and its ultimate  
5 collapse; his exhaustive report became a road map for more than a  
6 dozen congressional and executive branch investigations of  
7 corporate malfeasance, and it resulted in criminal prosecutions; in  
8 the wake of the scandal, Congress passed the Sarbanes-Oxley Act to  
9 strengthen financial and securities regulations; and

10           WHEREAS, After leaving UT, Mr. Powers became of counsel to  
11 the Jackson Walker law firm, where he generously shared his  
12 knowledge with newly minted attorneys and seasoned professionals  
13 alike; he was the recipient of many accolades, among them the Robert  
14 B. McKay Award from the American Bar Association and the French  
15 Order of the Légion d'Honneur, and he was selected as the 2014  
16 Alumnus of the Year by UC-Berkeley; and

17           WHEREAS, Bill Powers was a brilliant attorney, leading legal  
18 scholar, and visionary standard-bearer for higher education, and  
19 although he will be deeply missed by all who were privileged to  
20 share in the richness of his life, he has left an indelible imprint  
21 on both the practice of law and the educational landscape; now,  
22 therefore, be it

23           RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 86th Texas  
24 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the memory of Bill Powers and  
25 extend sincere sympathy to the members of his family: to his wife of  
26 36 years, Kim Heilbrun; to his children, Matt, Kate, Allison,  
27 Annie, and Reid Powers; to his sister, Susan Powers; to his six

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1 grandchildren; and to all who mourn his passing; and, 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 Bill  
5 Powers.