

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 500

WHEREAS, The year 2019 marks the 10th anniversary of the passage of the Tim Cole Act by the 81st Texas Legislature, and this milestone provides a fitting opportunity to honor the memory of those esteemed Texans who dedicated their lives to improving the state's criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS, Signed into law by Governor Rick Perry in 2009, the Tim Cole Act increased financial compensation for the wrongly imprisoned; the legislation is named in honor of Timothy Cole, the first person in the country to be exonerated posthumously through DNA testing; a veteran of the United States Army and former Texas Tech student, Mr. Cole died in prison in 1999; his family and the Innocence Project of Texas worked together to clear his name, and he received the state's first posthumous pardon in 2010; five years later, his alma mater presented his family with an honorary degree in law and social justice to recognize Mr. Cole's sacrifice and contribution to reforms in the state's criminal justice system; the City of Lubbock has also dedicated a statue in his memory; and

WHEREAS, The Innocence Project of Texas was founded in 2006 by attorneys Mike Ware and Jeff Blackburn to provide pro bono investigative and legal services to indigent Texans convicted of crimes they did not commit; since its inception, the organization has won the freedom of 26 men and women; among those cleared were four men, now deceased, who devoted themselves to helping others still wrongfully incarcerated; and

WHEREAS, James Lee Woodard of Dallas County was exonerated in 2009 after 27 years in prison, and while working in behalf of criminal justice reform, he donated \$100,000 to study the causes of faulty eyewitness identification; he passed away in October 2012; and

WHEREAS, Billy James Smith of Dallas County, exonerated in 2006 after two decades in prison, accepted speaking engagements across the country to address prison reform; in addition, he testified before the United States Congress and the Texas Legislature on numerous pieces of legislation; he passed away in March 2017; and

WHEREAS, Johnnie Lindsey of Dallas County, imprisoned for 26 years before his exoneration in 2008, became a private investigator and process server while working to free the innocent; he died in February 2018; and

WHEREAS, Ronald Gene Taylor of Harris County served 13 years in prison until 2008, when he was exonerated; he dedicated himself to criminal justice reform at the state and national level until his death in September 2018; and

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WHEREAS, These brave and resolute Texans set an inspiring example through their tremendous commitment to criminal justice reform, and their legacy will long endure; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 86th Legislature, hereby commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Tim Cole Act and pay tribute to the lives of Timothy Cole, James Lee Woodard, Johnnie Lindsey, Billy James Smith, and Ronald Gene Taylor.

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President of the Senate

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Senate on March 26, 2019.

Secretary of the Senate

Member, Texas Senate