

By: Kuempel

H.R. No. 2411

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, The Capitol community was deeply saddened by the  
2 loss of Robert Irwin Kelly, former parliamentarian of the Texas  
3 House of Representatives and director of the Texas Legislative  
4 Council, who passed away on December 9, 2021, at the age of 73; and

5 WHEREAS, Born to R. D. "Dick" Kelly and Betty Kelly in  
6 Texarkana, Arkansas, on June 2, 1948, Bob Kelly grew up with a  
7 sister, Debra; he excelled as a student, athlete, Eagle Scout, and  
8 youth community leader, and along the way, he also took dance  
9 lessons, earning the nickname "the Dancing Bear"; after initially  
10 enrolling at the University of Arkansas on a football scholarship,  
11 he wisely transferred to The University of Texas at Austin; and

12 WHEREAS, Mr. Kelly joined the Texas Legislative Council as  
13 the "Xerox copy boy" and became a protégé of Robert E. Johnson, then  
14 the agency's director and House parliamentarian; while learning the  
15 ins and outs of legislative procedure and strategy, Mr. Kelly was  
16 also embraced as a dear friend by the entire Johnson family; through  
17 hard work and dedication, he became assistant parliamentarian, and  
18 in 1981, Speaker Bill Clayton announced his appointment as  
19 parliamentarian; and

20 WHEREAS, During his 21-year tenure as parliamentarian and  
21 director of the Texas Legislative Council, Mr. Kelly also served  
22 under Speakers Gib Lewis and Pete Laney; he taught rules classes,  
23 mentored hundreds of council employees and freshman lawmakers, and  
24 mediated battles between the political parties, demonstrating a

1 rare, statesmanlike ability to help people overcome their  
2 differences; fiercely loyal to council staff, he was very  
3 protective when legislators publicly attributed a drafting error or  
4 undue delay to council staff; he was a brilliant tactician,  
5 choosing his battles carefully, and although he set an example of  
6 cordiality, he knew the value of a well-timed curse word, and he  
7 made it a point to remember when someone was untruthful or broke a  
8 promise; his efforts were always guided by respect for the  
9 constitutions of the United States and Texas, as well as a profound  
10 sense of public service; and

11 WHEREAS, Mr. Kelly was committed to the long-term success of  
12 the Legislature; he oversaw the introduction of computers and  
13 information technology to the legislative branch, and he was  
14 instrumental in the development of the Robert E. Johnson Office  
15 Building as a proper permanent home for the legislative support  
16 agencies; in retirement, he continued to serve as a wise elder,  
17 providing counsel to parliamentarians, legislators, and staff  
18 alike; and

19 WHEREAS, Mr. Kelly enjoyed many interests in his free time;  
20 an avid golfer, he was a longtime member of Onion Creek Club; he  
21 spent many happy hours hunting birds in Mexico and Port O'Connor in  
22 the company of friends, and he maintained a private pilot's license  
23 for years; he was a member of the board of the Coastal Conservation  
24 Association Texas, a lifetime member of the Texas Trophy Hunters  
25 Association, and a proud member of the Masonic Lodge; and

26 WHEREAS, Above all, Mr. Kelly was devoted to his wife, Susan  
27 Stewart; they traveled, dined, and entertained extensively, but

1 their most treasured moments were spent together on their QA Ranch  
2 outside Seguin, where the couple had settled near Mr. Kelly's dear  
3 friend, the late Representative Edmund Kuempel; in his retirement  
4 years, Mr. Kelly delighted in managing the ranch and watching the  
5 deer and other critters; following his passing, he was laid to rest  
6 shoulder-to-shoulder with iconic musician Jerry Jeff Walker at the  
7 Texas State Cemetery, where the two of them no doubt entertain one  
8 another with songs and yarns, and indulge in an occasional Lone  
9 Star; and

10 WHEREAS, Bob Kelly dedicated his long and noteworthy career  
11 to the betterment of Texas, earning the lasting respect and  
12 admiration of all who were privileged to know him, and his  
13 contributions to state government will continue to resonate for  
14 many years to come; now, therefore, be it

15 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 88th Texas  
16 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the memory of Robert Irwin Kelly  
17 and extend sincere condolences to all who mourn his passing; and, be  
18 it further

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