

By: Collier

H.R. No. 364

R E S O L U T I O N

1           WHEREAS, The State of Texas lost a civil rights hero and an  
2 admired jurist with the passing of the Honorable L. Clifford Davis  
3 of Arlington on February 15, 2025, at the age of 100; and

4           WHEREAS, Born to Augustus and Dora Davis on October 12, 1924,  
5 Clifford Davis grew up on the family farm in Wilton, Arkansas; he  
6 graduated from Philander Smith College and then sought to enroll in  
7 the University of Arkansas Law School, which finally offered  
8 admission under separate, decidedly unequal conditions; he chose to  
9 complete his degree at Howard University, but his struggle opened  
10 the door for other Black students at the University of Arkansas;  
11 beginning his career in Arkansas, he focused on civil rights  
12 litigation; and

13           WHEREAS, In 1954, Judge Davis relocated to Fort Worth and  
14 founded one of the state's first Black-owned law firms; he assisted  
15 future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall on a matter that  
16 would become the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education*; continuing  
17 to battle segregation, he filed successful federal suits against  
18 the Mansfield and Fort Worth school districts; in his work as  
19 general counsel for the NAACP, he worked tirelessly to end  
20 discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodations,  
21 both through the courts and by reaching agreements with business  
22 owners; in 1983, he was appointed as a criminal district court  
23 judge, and the following year, he became the first Black judge  
24 elected in Tarrant County; he established Tarrant County's first

1 drug diversion court during his tenure; after retiring as a senior  
2 district judge in 2004, he became of counsel to the Fort Worth firm  
3 of Johnson, Vaughn & Heiskell; he primarily handled pro bono cases,  
4 continuing his years-long tradition of giving generously of his  
5 time and expertise to Legal Aid of North Texas and the NAACP Justice  
6 Project; a mentor to many, he funded scholarships and paid tuition  
7 bills for young law students, and he visited children at the Fort  
8 Worth elementary school named in his honor; a member of the National  
9 Bar Association Hall of Fame, he also received an honorary degree  
10 from the University of Arkansas School of Law in 2017; and

11 WHEREAS, Judge Davis shared a fulfilling marriage with his  
12 wife, Ethel R. Davis, that spanned nearly six decades until her  
13 passing in 2015, and they were the proud parents of two daughters,  
14 Avis and Karen; and

15 WHEREAS, Resolute in his commitment to justice for all,  
16 Clifford Davis dismantled barriers to liberty, equality, and  
17 advancement, and his legacy will continue to resonate powerfully in  
18 the years to come; now, therefore, be it

19 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 89th Texas  
20 Legislature hereby pay tribute to the life of the Honorable  
21 L. Clifford Davis and extend sincere condolences to his daughters,  
22 Avis and Karen Davis, to his other relatives and many friends, and  
23 to all who mourn his passing; and, be it further

24 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be  
25 prepared for his family and that when the Texas House of  
26 Representatives adjourns this day, it do so in memory of Clifford  
27 Davis.