

By: Miles, et al.

S.R. No. 201

R E S O L U T I O N

1           WHEREAS, Residents of Houston lost a giant of the civil  
2 rights movement and visionary community leader with the passing of  
3 the Reverend William A. Lawson on May 14, 2024, at the age of 95; and

4           WHEREAS, In 1962, while serving as director of the Baptist  
5 Student Union at Texas Southern University, Reverend Lawson  
6 established Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, which became a center  
7 for students engaged in nonviolent protests against  
8 discrimination; he befriended Martin Luther King Jr., inviting him  
9 to speak at the church; Reverend Lawson chartered the Houston  
10 chapter of Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference,  
11 which he would lead for more than three decades; in the midst of  
12 upheaval across the nation, he quietly met with local business  
13 leaders, slipping through the back door of the whites-only Rice  
14 Hotel; his serenity, compassion, and unfailing good humor were  
15 crucial in bringing people together and maintaining calm during the  
16 swift desegregation of public facilities; and

17           WHEREAS, Reverend Lawson worked with other prominent faith  
18 leaders to address challenges confronting the city, among them  
19 homelessness, racism, and antisemitism; he persuaded other local  
20 religious institutions to commit to community development, and he  
21 set an example by including women as deacons and trustees of his  
22 church; even after retiring, he remained a tireless champion of the  
23 vulnerable and disenfranchised; the congregation named him  
24 founding pastor emeritus, and among myriad other accolades, the

1 William A. Lawson Institute for Peace and Prosperity was  
2 established in his honor; he received honorary doctorates from  
3 Howard Payne University, the University of Houston, and TSU; and

4 WHEREAS, The son of William Lawson Sr. and Clarisse Riggs,  
5 Bill Lawson was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on June 28, 1928; he  
6 was raised with three siblings in Kansas City, Kansas, by his mother  
7 and her second husband, Walter Cade; after graduating from  
8 Tennessee State University, he went on to complete a bachelor's and  
9 master's degree at Central Baptist Theological Seminary; on January  
10 30, 1954, he married the former Audrey Hoffman, and they were  
11 blessed with four children, Melanie, Cheryl, Eric, and Roxanne; he  
12 was preceded in death by his beloved wife and son; and

13 WHEREAS, Reverend Lawson left an indelible imprint on the  
14 city of Houston, and although he will be deeply missed, he will  
15 remain a source of enduring inspiration to all who were privileged  
16 to know him; now, therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED, That the Senate of the 89th Texas Legislature  
18 hereby pay tribute to the life of the Reverend William A. Lawson and  
19 extend sincere condolences to all who mourn his passing; and, be it  
20 further

21 RESOLVED, That an official copy of this resolution be  
22 prepared for his family and that when the Texas Senate adjourns this  
23 day, it do so in memory of William Lawson.