

1 State of Arkansas
2 95th General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2025

SMR 4

4
5 By: Senator S. Flowers

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8 **SENATE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION**

9 TO REMEMBER AND HONOR THE LIFE, LEGACY, AND IMPACT OF
10 THE HONORABLE L. CLIFFORD DAVIS.

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13 **Subtitle**

14 TO REMEMBER AND HONOR THE LIFE, LEGACY,
15 AND IMPACT OF THE HONORABLE L. CLIFFORD
16 DAVIS.

17
18 WHEREAS, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis, formerly of Arlington, Texas,
19 passed away on February 15, 2025, at the age of one hundred (100) years; and
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21 WHEREAS, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis was born on October 12, 1924,
22 in Wilton, Arkansas, to Augustus and Dora Davis, who owned a small farm and
23 rented additional land to cultivate and taught their children Christian
24 values, an entrepreneurial mindset, and self-sufficiency; and
25

26 WHEREAS, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis's parents cared so much about
27 education that, because of restrictions on secondary education for Black
28 Arkansans in Little River County at that time, the family rented a home in
29 Little Rock, Arkansas, so that the children could attend high school there
30 under the supervision of their aunt, and Davis ultimately graduated from
31 Dunbar High School; and
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33 WHEREAS, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis graduated from what was then
34 Philander Smith College in May 1945 with his bachelor's degree, and he
35 attended the illustrious Howard University School of Law in Washington, D.C.,
36 during the 1945-1946 school year, then attended Atlanta University to study



1 economics during 1946-1947 while he sought admission to the more affordable
2 University of Arkansas School of Law; and

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4 WHEREAS, at that time, the University of Arkansas School of Law used
5 racially discriminatory practices to consider admitting Black students and
6 while the school admitted the Honorable L. Clifford Davis, they required him
7 to keep to different financial requisites and separate instruction practices
8 compared with white students, so he declined the offer yet simultaneously
9 cracked open the door for admission of Blacks to the university's various
10 professional schools without court litigation; and

11
12 WHEREAS, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis returned to Howard University
13 School of Law in the fall of 1947, graduated in June 1949, was admitted to
14 the bar in Arkansas in July 1949, and started his legal practice the next
15 month in Pine Bluff, focusing his early career, under the tutelage of
16 attorney Harold Flowers in Pine Bluff, on civil rights and desegregation
17 litigation; and

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19 WHEREAS, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis assisted future Supreme Court
20 Justice Thurgood Marshall and the National Association for the Advancement of
21 Colored People with the landmark 1954 desegregation case, Brown v. Board of
22 Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954); and

23
24 WHEREAS, in 1952, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis moved to Texas and
25 taught business courses at Paul Quinn College in Waco while establishing
26 residency in Texas to take the Texas bar exam, and he was admitted to the bar
27 in Texas in 1953, moving to Fort Worth to practice in 1954; and

28
29 WHEREAS, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis opened the first solo practice
30 for a Black lawyer in the historic downtown Ninth Street business district in
31 Fort Worth as a branch office partnered with Dallas legal trailblazers C.B.
32 Bunkley and Louis A. Bedford; and

33
34 WHEREAS, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis's preeminent mark on North
35 Texas was in the pursuit of equality, as he played a pivotal role in
36 desegregating the public schools of Mansfield and Fort Worth Independent

1 School Districts, an accomplishment later recognized when a local elementary
2 school was named in his honor in 2002; and

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4 WHEREAS, in 1977, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis and thirteen (13)
5 other local attorneys formed the Fort Worth Black Bar Association, which
6 later became the Tarrant County Black Bar Association and then the L.
7 Clifford Davis Legal Association; and

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9 WHEREAS, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis was elected as the first Black
10 judge of a state district court in Tarrant County in 1984 and he served two
11 (2) decades as a district judge, including service as a Senior Visiting Judge
12 before his retirement; and

13
14 WHEREAS, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis was an active advocate for
15 civil rights in Arkansas and Texas, not only working for integration in the
16 public schools but also expanding opportunities for jobs, voting rights, the
17 holding of public office, and housing for minorities while promoting civic
18 responsibility for the greater good among minority populations; and

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20 WHEREAS, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis was inducted into the Arkansas
21 Black Hall of Fame along with the Little Rock Nine; and

22
23 WHEREAS, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis maintained a lifetime
24 membership in Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., for over seventy (70) years and
25 achieved the pinnacle of Freemasonry as a 33rd Degree Mason; and

26
27 WHEREAS, in 2017, when the Honorable L. Clifford Davis was ninety-two
28 (92) years of age, the University of Arkansas School of Law granted him an
29 honorary doctorate in place of the one he was denied via racial
30 discrimination in 1949; and

31
32 WHEREAS, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis garnered dozens of legal,
33 civic, and community service awards during his life and career, including the
34 National Bar Association's Hall of Fame award, the National Association for
35 the Advancement of Colored People's Robert Ming award, the Tarrant County Bar
36 Association's Silver Gavel and Blackstone awards, the Rally for Education,

1 Inc., Mentor award, and the Anti-Defamation League of North Texas's
2 Trailblazer award, and the Tarrant County Commissioner designated "Judge L.
3 Clifford Davis Day"; and
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5 WHEREAS, as he approached one hundred (100) years of age, the Honorable
6 L. Clifford Davis was inducted as a Texas Legal Legend and was honored with
7 the Dallas Bar Association's Legacy award, and he was named a Living Legend
8 by the Black Academy of Arts and Letters of Dallas and the Tarrant County
9 Black Historical and Genealogical Society, and this was also a time when many
10 feature stories about his legendary life and career appeared in preeminent
11 Texas newspapers and magazines; and
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13 WHEREAS, the Honorable L. Clifford Davis was married to his beautiful,
14 dear wife Ethel R. Weaver Davis for fifty-nine (59) years, and to this union
15 two (2) daughters, Avis and Karen, were born; and
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17 WHEREAS, upon the passing of the Honorable L. Clifford Davis, a
18 statement issued by his alma mater Philander Smith University, from which he
19 received a Distinguished Alumni award, said, "Philander Smith University
20 honors the life and legacy of Judge L. Clifford Davis, [class of] [19]45, a
21 distinguished alumnus, civil rights attorney, trailblazing jurist, and a 2007
22 Arkansas Black Hall of Fame inductee. A fierce advocate for human rights and
23 justice, Judge Davis dedicated his career to dismantling barriers and paving
24 the way for future generations . . . He blazed a trail as an influential
25 attorney and judge who helped shape the legal landscape in Arkansas and
26 Texas, particularly in the fight for civil rights and equal access to
27 education . . . In October 2024, Judge Davis celebrated his 100th birthday[,]
28 a reflection of a life well-lived in service to justice and equality"; and
29

30 WHEREAS, Senator Stephanie Flowers said of the Honorable L. Clifford
31 Davis, "Judge Davis was a born leader, an intelligent member of the bench, a
32 committed public servant, and a focused leader whose wisdom and courage
33 touched everyone he encountered on his personal and professional paths. Judge
34 Davis first practiced law in Arkansas with my father, the Honorable William
35 Harold Flowers. Judge Davis demonstrated tremendous perseverance and positive
36 influence throughout his [one hundred] years, four months, and three days of

1 life on this earth. A giant of a man who worked for the protection and
2 general welfare of others, Judge Davis persevered to fulfill God's charge for
3 his life. He helped change the trajectory of history and made a difference in
4 everything he touched. He will be greatly missed. Although his earthly
5 appointment has come to a close, I know for certain his legacy will continue
6 to make an impact in the years to come",
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8 NOW THEREFORE,

9 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
10 STATE OF ARKANSAS:

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12 THAT the Senate remember and honor the life, legacy, and impact of the
13 Honorable L. Clifford Davis.
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15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT upon adoption, a copy of this resolution be
16 presented to the family of the Honorable L. Clifford Davis by the Secretary
17 of the Senate.
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