

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
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By: Ellis  
Administration  
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As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

The legacy that the Honorable Barbara Jordan established in her service to the citizens of Texas and the United States of America remains a source of inspiration to countless people, and time cannot diminish the contributions of this admirable patriot, politician, teacher, mentor, friend, icon, and hero. Born on February 21, 1936, to Benjamin and Arlyne Jordan, Barbara Jordan was raised in Houston's Fifth Ward and graduated with honors from Phillis Wheatley High School in the Houston Independent School District. Ms. Jordan attended Texas Southern University (TSU), where she majored in government and history and was a member of the debate team, winning numerous honors for her oratory skills. After graduating magna cum laude from TSU, she enrolled at the Boston University School of Law and received her law degree in 1959. In 1966, Ms. Jordan became the first black woman ever elected to the Texas Senate as well as the first African American to be elected as a state senator in the United States (U.S.) since 1883.

Following her successful run for a seat in the U.S. Congress in 1972, Ms. Jordan served in the House of Representatives from 1973 until 1979, during which time she enhanced her reputation as an evocative public speaker and arose as a leader on issues relating to voting rights, consumer protection, energy, and the environment. In her role as a member of the House Committee on the Judiciary, she gained national prominence during the Watergate impeachment proceedings against President Nixon in 1974. Speaking before the committee, she movingly portrayed the intention of the framers of the U.S. Constitution and eloquently expressed her faith in that document, even as she noted that "We the People," the first words of the preamble to the Constitution, were not originally intended to apply to African Americans. In 1976, Congresswoman Jordan became the first female and the first African American to serve as the keynote speaker at the Democratic National Convention, and her speech reiterated her faith in the Constitution and the desire to form a national community that would fulfill the country's purpose of creating and sustaining a society in which all are equal.

Ms. Jordan retired from elective office in 1979 and became a distinguished professor at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin. For the remainder of her life, she focused on mentoring a new generation of aspiring leaders, encouraging them to excel and to commit themselves to public service. At the request of President Bill Clinton, she became chair of the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform in the mid-1990s and held that office until her death. In 1994, President Clinton honored her for her patriotism and outstanding service by awarding her the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the country's highest civilian honor. Barbara Jordan passed away in January 1996, but her lifelong commitment to freedom, integrity, equality, and justice resonates as powerfully today as it did in years past, and she is indeed deserving of special recognition, on the anniversary of her birth, in the state that she served so well.

### **RESOLVED**

That the 82nd Legislature of the State of Texas hereby designate February 21 through 27 of each year from 2011 through 2020 as Barbara Jordan Freedom Week.