

SECTION 1. DESIGNATION.

The facility of the United States Geological Survey and the United States Bureau of Reclamation located at 230 Collins Road, Boise, Idaho, shall be known and designated as the "F.H. Newell Building".

SEC. 2. REFERENCES.

Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the facility referred to in section 1 shall be deemed to be a reference to the "F.H. Newell Building".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) and the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE).

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H.R. 3124, introduced by the gentleman from Idaho (Mr. OTTER), designates the facility of the U.S. Geological Survey and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation located in Boise, Idaho, as the "F.H. Newell Building."

Fredrick Haynes Newell was born in Bradford, Pennsylvania, on March 5, 1862. He attended MIT where he studied mining engineering. Upon his graduation he went to work for the U.S. Geological Service, when he was tapped to head an irrigation survey team mapping sites of potential dams in the American West.

While doing his work, F.H. Newell developed several stream-gauging techniques and invented the instruments that are still in use today by the Geological Survey. Upon passage of the Reclamation Act of 1902, F.H. Newell was appointed as the first chief engineer and later the second director of what has now become the Bureau of Reclamation.

In his autobiography, President Teddy Roosevelt praised Newell for his "constructive imagination," leadership, and high character. After leaving federal service, F.H. Newell became an educator, being named head of the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Illinois. He was also the author or co-author of seven books and a number of articles on engineering techniques.

This is a fitting tribute to a creative and dedicated public servant. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Ms. NORTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 3124 is a bill to designate the facility of the United States Geological Survey and the United States Bureau of Reclamation located at 230 Collins Road, Boise, Idaho, as the "F.H. Newell Building."

F.H. Newell was the first hydrographic engineer for the U.S. Geological Survey and a person who contrib-

uted significantly to the water development in Idaho and throughout the West. He appreciated the need for saving the forest and the soil as well as the need for irrigation.

Mr. Newell was single-mindedly devoted to the task of reclamation and protection of natural resources. He is described as having a constructive imagination, a forceful drive and dedication. President Roosevelt viewed him as the model public servant. It is very appropriate to acknowledge the significant career contributions of F.H. Newell with this designation. I urge passage of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1900

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of the bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BONNER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3124.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GARZA-VELA UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1402) to designate a United States courthouse in Brownsville, Texas, as the "Garza-Vela United States Courthouse," as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 1402

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. DESIGNATION.

The United States courthouse located at the corner of Seventh Street and East Jackson Street in Brownsville, Texas, shall be known and designated as the "Reynaldo G. Garza and Filemon B. Vela United States Courthouse".

SEC. 2. REFERENCES.

Any reference in a law, map, regulation, document, paper, or other record of the United States to the United States courthouse referred to in section 1 shall be deemed to be a reference to the "Reynaldo G. Garza and Filemon B. Vela United States Courthouse".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) and the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE).

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 1402 introduced by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ) designates the United States court-

house located in Brownsville, Texas, as the Reynaldo G. Garza and Filemon B. Vela United States Courthouse.

This legislation honors two men who were pioneers, as well as judicial giants, yet at the same time two men who made time for family and community.

Reynaldo Guerra Garza was born in Brownsville, Texas in 1915 and spent his lifetime working in and serving that community as an attorney in the Army Air Corps and as a Federal judge committed to protecting the rights of legal immigrants.

President Kennedy appointed Judge Garza to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas in 1961. At that time, Judge Garza became the first Mexican American on any U.S. District Court. In 1979, when President Jimmy Carter appointed Judge Garza to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, he became the first Mexican American to gain that honor as well.

Filemon Bartolome Vela was born in Arlington, Texas in 1936 and attended the Harlingen public schools. Like Judge Garza, he dedicated his life to South Texas, first as a State judge, and then as a Federal judge, taking over the seat vacated by Judge Garza upon his appointment to the circuit court of appeals.

Judge Vela is perhaps best known in the community for his work with the schools, speaking to children on career days and encouraging youth to get an education by supporting literacy programs.

Each of these gentleman succumbed to their illnesses in the past year. This naming is a fitting tribute to their dedicated service. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I also want to recognize my colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ), for his dedication in bringing this legislation to the floor. I thank him for ensuring that these men are recognized for their service.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Ms. NORTON asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I join with Mr. ORTIZ of Brownsville, Texas, in supporting H.R. 1402, a bill to name the courthouse in Brownsville, Texas as the Reynaldo G. Garza—Filemon B. Vela United States Courthouse.

Mr. Speaker, this bill honors the life and works of two extraordinary Mexican-Americans. Judge Reynaldo Garza was born in Brownsville in 1915. He graduated from local elementary schools as well as Brownsville High School. After graduating from Brownsville Junior College he attended the University of Texas where he received a combined degree of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Law.

Judge Garza served his country during World War II in the Air Force. After the war he returned to Brownsville to practice law.

In 1961 President Kennedy appointed Judge Garza to the District Court for the Southern

District of Texas. In 1979 President Carter appointed him to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

In addition to his judicial duties Judge Garza has long been interested in education issues. He served former Governors John Connally and Governor Mark White on commissions to improve the quality of education in Texas. Judge Garza recognized the importance of education in judicial proceedings and his concern for the uneducated man at the mercy of unscrupulous people.

Judge Garza was very active in his church, and has served the Knights of Columbus in the Brownsville area for many years. Pope Pious XII twice decorated Judge Garza for his work in behalf of Catholic Charities. In 1989 Judge Garza was honored by the University of Texas with the Distinguished Alumnus award.

His record of public service includes work with the Rotary Club, the Latin-American Relation Committee of Brownsville, trustee at his law school, advisory council for the Boy Scouts, and he was elected as City Commissioner of the City of Brownsville.

It is fitting and proper to honor Judge Garza's outstanding, rich life, his commitment to excellence, and his numerous public contributions.

Judge Filemon Vela was also a native Texas and a veteran of the United States Army. He attended Texas Southmost College, and the University of Texas. His law degree is from St. Mary's School of Law in San Antonio.

Judge Vela served as a Commissioner of the City of Brownsville. He was an active member of the Judges Advisory Committee to the U.S. Sentencing Commission. Judge Vela is a former law instructor, and an attorney for the Cameron County Child Welfare Department.

His civil activities include being the charter President for the Esperanza Home for Boys, and co-sponsor of the Spanish Radio Program "Enrich your Life, Complete your Studies," Judge Vela's other civic activities include membership on the Independent School District Task Force, and membership in the General Assembly of the Texas Catholic Conference. He is also an active member of the Lions Club.

Judge Vela was nominated by President Carter for the Federal bench and was confirmed by the United States Senate in 1980.

Judge Vela's career was filled with successes, commitment to his family, devotion to his religion and his church, love for his work and respect for his colleagues. It is most fitting to honor Judge Vela with this designation.

I join Congressman ORTIZ in supporting H.R. 1402.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition of the hard work of the author of this bill who brought this bill forward, I yield such time as he may consume to my good friend the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ).

(Mr. ORTIZ asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks, and include extraneous material.)

Mr. ORTIZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank very much the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) for bringing this bill to the floor, as well as the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON), the gentleman from Tennessee (Chairman DUNCAN), the gen-

tleman from Alaska (Chairman YOUNG), the ranking member, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR) and members of the staff for quickly bringing this bill to the floor.

I also want to thank the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GONZALEZ) for also speaking on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, today we are passing long overdue legislation that names the United States Federal Courthouse in Brownsville, Texas, the Reynaldo G. Garza and Filemon B. Vela United States Courthouse. Earlier this year, Judge Vela sadly passed away, and 2 weeks ago Judge Garza also passed away, leaving behind two distinct and honorable legacies in South Texas.

These two men were judicial stalwarts. Individually, they were trailblazers, pioneers, and an inspiration for many Hispanics, particularly Mexican Americans from the Rio Grande Valley. Together they are an enormous wealth of riches we want to forever remember.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for their action on this bill, and ask that we pass it unanimously.

Mr. Speaker, I provide the following for the RECORD:

QUORUM REPORT

BROWNSVILLE NATIVE DESCRIBED AS TRAILBLAZER, JUDICIAL LEGEND

Tributes have been pouring in for Judge Reynaldo Garza, the nation's first Hispanic federal judge. The Brownsville native and son of Mexican immigrants died Tuesday at the age of 89 after battling pneumonia.

President Kennedy appointed Garza to the federal judgeship in 1961. President Carter appointed him to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. In between, he turned down an opportunity to be Attorney General under President Johnson because he liked being a federal judge and did not want to be away from his family.

"Judge Garza was a trailblazer, a pioneer who set the stage for all those that followed," said state Sen. Eddie Lucio (D-Brownsville). "He was a man of great stature. He lived life as he preached it, as a devout Christian. He had a tremendous work ethic and was an inspirational speaker. He gave you a big grin that made you feel good. You just knew he cared."

Lucio said he knew Garza all his life. Garza officiated when Lucio took his oath of office as Cameron County Treasurer in 1971.

"I remember seeing him around the county courthouse when I was a young boy and he was still practicing law," Lucio recalled. "I am proud to say that he and my father were the two most influential men in my life. He preached Americanism and patriotism."

U.S. Rep. Solomon Ortiz (D-Corpus Christi) said South Texas has lost a friend, pioneer, hero and judicial legend with his passing.

"Judge Garza became a legend in the South Texas area by virtue of his commitment to education, community and family . . . and in the evenhandedness of how he dispensed justice," Ortiz said.

"Judge Garza's wit, workhorse energy, pointed candor, and razor sharp focus on questions of law won him an amazing number of fans in Washington and elsewhere in the legal/judicial establishment."

Ortiz said Garza's granddaughter had worked as an intern in his Capitol Hill office this summer. Ortiz said he was working in Congress to name the new federal courthouse in Brownsville partially in his honor.

"I have talked to members on the Committee where the bill is being held, appealing for them to move quickly to pass this bill. Its rapid passage would be a great tribute to Judge Garza's life work," Ortiz said.

Garza's funeral is scheduled for Saturday at the Fort Brown Memorial Center in Brownsville.

[From the Brownsville Herald, Sept. 15, 2004]
NATION'S FIRST MEXICAN-AMERICAN DISTRICT
JUDGE DIES OF PNEUMONIA
(By Laura B. Martinez)

U.S. Circuit Judge Reynaldo G. Garza, the nation's first Mexican-American district judge, died Tuesday at a Brownsville hospital. He was 89.

Garza died at 9:40 a.m. at Valley Baptist Medical Center-Brownsville, formerly Brownsville Medical Center, surrounded by his family, according to his son Reynaldo G. Garza Jr. The judge died of pneumonia. He had been battling the illness since July 11.

"He had gone home for 10 days and had a relapse," Garza Jr. said.

"Pneumonia is a tough thing for an 89-year-old to beat and his body finally gave up."

As recently as Sunday, Judge Garza was still mentally alert, his son said.

Up until last month, Judge Garza's law clerks were still bringing work to his home and the hospital.

"He would read over the papers and sign whatever was necessary," Garza Jr. said, "He was sharp enough to still be working."

"He was physically in bad shape, but mentally he was still in very good shape."

Judge Garza is survived by his wife, Bertha Champion Garza; five children, Reynaldo G. Garza Jr., David C. Garza, Ygnacio P. Garza, Bertha Garza Elizondo and Monica Garza; 12 grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

He was nominated to the bench by President John F. Kennedy in March of 1961 and confirmed by the Senate in April 1961 for the Southern District of Texas. He was nominated to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit by President Carter in April 1979 and confirmed by the Senate in July 1979. He assumed senior status in July 1982.

In 1977, the Brownsville school district honored Garza by naming an elementary school after him. There's also a school in McAllen named for him as well.

In 2003, U.S. Rep. Solomon Ortiz, D-Corpus Christi, renewed his efforts to get the new federal courthouse partially named after Garza and the late senior U.S. District Judge Filemon B. Vela.

Vela died in April of stomach cancer. He was 68.

The bill is pending.

Former Brownsville Mayor Blanca S. Vela said Tuesday that Garza had been something of a father figure to her late husband.

When her husband Judge Vela died in April, Garza took the loss very hard. The two had been close friends, she said. "They were close with each other for years. He was in tears," Blanca Vela said. "I went to his house to console him."

"The judge was an inspiration to my husband. My husband though very much of him as a father," after his own father died more than 10 years ago, she said.

The two families had been friends for more than 30 years. The two met when Judge Vela was a practicing attorney and Judge Garza was on the bench.

"It's a loss in the field of law, for justice, fairness and equality and all those virtues that he had and was so supportive of," Blanca Vela said. "I'm saddened to hear about his death."

Garza touched many in the legal community, both professionally and personally.

Undeterred by his illness, he officiated the swearing in of U.S. District Judge Ricardo H. Hinojosa in McAllen as chairman of the federal sentencing commission. The ceremony was performed in Garza's hospital room in Brownsville on Aug. 3, Hinojosa said.

Hinojosa met Garza when he was on the bench at the federal courthouse in Brownsville. The two courtrooms were located on the same floor.

"Judge Garza was a great mentor and immediately made me feel at home . . . he was always ready to provide advice in counsel," Hinojosa said.

Hinojosa said he has admired Garza since he was a boy. He remembers attending naturalization ceremonies in Starr County, which Garza presided over.

"I remember sitting there and not realizing that someday I would be working on the same floor as he did," Hinojosa said. "He's an example of anything that is possible in this great country."

"The rest of us have come along after him because he opened doors for us. He opened doors that remain open for the rest of us."

Students and staff at Reynaldo G. Garza Elementary School were informed of the judge's death Tuesday afternoon.

"Judge Reynaldo G. Garza has been an incredibly positive role model for the students at Garza Elementary since the school's inception in 1977," Principal Cesar Martinez said.

"The entire administration, staff, student body and community have his family in their thoughts."

Judge Garza and his family were actively involved at the school, showing up on the campus to read to the students during National Reading month, and helping out with fund-raisers, Martinez said.

The school will have a remembrance ceremony for the judge on Sept. 24. Details are pending.

School officials had planned to have a TAKS or Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills testing rally on that date, but opted to change the rally to a service instead.

News of Garza's death brought Brownsville resident Joe C. Wolfe to tears Tuesday. Wolfe said Garza was a guest speaker at a Veterans for Foreign Wars event in 1990. Wolfe was the commander post captain in Brownsville at that time.

After watching a television news broadcast, Wolfe, 78, went outside and lowered the U.S. Flag posted in front of his home to half-staff.

"He's my hero," an emotional Wolfe said. "He'll go down in history. I'm proud, because of him."

Funeral services are under the direction of Darling Mouser Funeral Home. Preliminary plans include family visitations at 5 p.m. Friday at St. Mary's Catholic Church, 1914 Barnard Road, followed by a rosary at 7 p.m.

A funeral Mass is tentatively set for 10 a.m. Saturday at Jacob Brown Auditorium with burial to follow at Buena Vista Burial Park.

[From the Rio Grande Valley Bureau]

(By Mariano Castillo)

McALLEN.—Reynaldo Garza, a senior judge on the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals and the first Mexican American appointed to the federal bench, died Tuesday in a Brownsville hospital at 89.

A native of Brownsville, Garza was described as an inspiration for generations of Hispanics, particularly Mexican Americans from the Rio Grande Valley.

He'd been battling pneumonia for more than a month.

"He was truly one of the greats of the area," said U.S. District Judge Ricardo

Hinojosa of McAllen, a longtime friend. "We followed his path after he was the first to walk through that door."

Hinojosa recalled the awe he felt when as a boy he watched Garza officiate at a naturalization ceremony. More than 20 years later, when he and Garza presided over similar ceremonies together, "it always took me back," he said.

But the judge said Garza's influence transcended race and region, adding: "He was a role model for all federal judges in this country."

President John F. Kennedy appointed Garza to the federal bench in 1961. In 1979, President Carter named him to the New Orleans-based appeals court, which has jurisdiction over federal cases in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

People from all backgrounds respected Garza for being accessible yet sophisticated, U.S. District Judge George Kazan of Laredo said.

"He's one of those guys that you talk about that can be just at ease with a president as with an undocumented alien because he just had a good touch with people," Kazan said.

U.S. Rep. Solomon Ortiz, D-Corpus Christi, said he'd try once again to pass a bill to rename the federal courthouse in Brownsville in Garza's honor.

Garza recalled turning down an offer by Carter to be U.S. attorney general so he could remain in the Valley.

Garza's parents were from Matamoros, Mexico.

The sixth of eight children, Garza was born July 7, 1915, and attended junior college in Brownsville, graduating in 1935. He was a laborer for the Works Progress Administration to pay for his studies at the University of Texas at Austin, where he obtained a law degree. He started a law practice in Brownsville.

He ran for the school board and city commission. During World War II he served in the U.S. Army Air Corps. He was an established lawyer by the time Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson recommended him to Kennedy for the federal judgeship.

"I always said I hope I got the appointment because I was qualified, not because I'm Mexican American, but I knew I had to do a good job or else my actions would reflect not only on my ability, but also that of other Mexican Americans," Garza said in "All Rise," a biography written by Brownsville native Louise Ann Fisch.

Fisch, who now lives in Maryland, said Garza "never lost his small town origins and he could bridge the gap between the Anglo and Mexican cultures."

The cases he presided over as a federal judge in the 1960s and 1970s included several that contributed to the civil rights changes of the era, such as challenges to a racially segregated union and the suspension of a public school student for passing out anti-war leaflets during the Vietnam War.

Garza worked during his retirement years, and from his hospital bed, he administered the oath of office for Hinojosa to chair the U.S. Sentencing Commission as seven friends and witnesses crowded into the room Aug. 3.

"It is unfortunate in some respects that so few people, unless they were close to him, have a sense of what a pioneer and what a leader he was—not only in the legal field but in the community in terms of the charitable," said U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Tony Garza, who is not related to the judge. "He was there doing things when other folks were not even imagining them. He has, and it should be recognized, a huge legacy."

Visitation will be Friday at 5 p.m. at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Brownsville, with a rosary at 7 p.m.

The funeral is scheduled for Saturday at 10 a.m. at the Fort Brown Memorial Center in Brownsville. He'll be buried in Buena Vista Cemetery.

Garza is survived by his wife, Bertha; five children; 12 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

[From the Brownsville Herald, Sept. 19, 2004]
JUDICIAL TRAILBLAZER: JUDGE GARZA LAID TO REST

(By Idefonso Ortiz)

Hundreds gathered Saturday to bid farewell to a judicial pioneer.

U.S. Circuit Court Judge Reynaldo Garza, the nation's first Mexican-American district judge, was laid to rest Saturday as family, friends and colleagues wiped tears from their faces.

But even in their sorrow, mourners could not help but smile as they watched a video of Garza recalling some of his memorable moments from a legendary career on the bench.

"I had a young man from a well-known family in Donna and I sentenced him to five years. I was going to give him probate, but the poor lad fainted before I had the chance," Garza said, chuckling. "After they revived him I suspended the sentence and gave him probation."

Garza's chuckle lightened the mood—something he did countless times in life, according to his son Ignacio. Even in Garza's last days, he maintained his sense of humor.

"He began to plan," the son said. "He said, 'don't bury me for three or four days. I want to give time for my law clerks to be there.' If he ever figures out how to use a phone in heaven he will call those who didn't come."

Judging by the overflowing crowd at the Mass and burial, Garza won't have many phone calls to make.

Senators, federal judges and other well-wishers crammed inside Jacob Brown Auditorium for a morning Mass and paid their final respects to Garza at Buena Vista Cemetery.

President Bush also offered his condolences in a video message played after the Mass.

"Those of us who are from Texas are proud to say we are both Texans," Bush said. "We will honor his memory today."

Judge Garza died of pneumonia on Tuesday after battling the illness since July 11. He was 89.

Garza was appointed to the bench in March 1961 by President John F. Kennedy, who nominated him for the Southern District of Texas. Garza was nominated to the U.S. Court of Appeal for the Fifth Circuit by President Carter in March 1979 and the Senate confirmed the nomination in July. Three years later he assumed senior status.

During Saturday's Mass, Monsignor Gustavo Barrera took to the podium to talk about Garza's unbreakable faith, as Bishop Raymundo Peña sprinkled ritual incense throughout the altar.

"When he was able, he was at daily Mass," Barrera said as he looked at the sea of people holding back tears. "He was with his family, at the bench or at church."

Barrera said the judge had a gift to help those who needed it most.

"He had the light of Christ in him," he said, "and he could see the light of Christ in other people."

After Mass, dozens of vehicles lined the streets of Brownsville as they followed Garza to his final resting place at Buena Vista Cemetery. More than 40 law enforcement officers escorted the procession to the cemetery as a Border Patrol helicopter hovered above.

The mourners were greeted by dozens of flower arrangements, creating a 5-foot wall that served as a background for the burial ceremony.

There, they bid farewell to the judge.

"Judge Garza, he was a wonderful mentor to me and to many of my colleagues," said U.S. Circuit Court Judge Hilda Tagle. "He was devoted to his family and he was loved by all."

Juliet V. Garcia, president of the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, said Garza was a good friend.

"He was a simple, man, he was a friend to all and we will miss him," she said.

Even those who had not met the judge attended the burial to pay respects.

"He was a good person, he did a lot of good for people," said Cervando Cardenas. "I lived a few blocks from the school with his name (Garza Elementary), my kids went there and I had to come say goodbye."

[From the Brownsville Herald, Apr. 14, 2004]

JUDGE FILEMON VELA LOSES BATTLE WITH STOMACH CANCER

Senior U.S. District Judge Filemon B. Vela, one of Brownsville's most notable figures, died Tuesday at a Harlingen hospital. He was 68.

Vela died at 12:33 p.m. in the emergency room at Valley Baptist Medical Center, said hospital spokesman Mike Swartz. The judge had been on an airplane Tuesday en route from Houston, where he had been undergoing treatment for stomach cancer at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, said his son Filemon Vela Jr.

"My father fought a very courageous battle with cancer, and this morning, he was returning for further treatment, and after landing in this place that he loved so dearly, he passed away in peace," he said.

"On behalf of our father and our family, I would like to thank all of our friends for their phone calls, their visits, their thoughts and prayers."

Judge Vela was married to former Brownsville Mayor Blanca Sanchez Vela. They had three children.

Viewings will be held from 7 to 9 a.m. Thursday and Friday at the Brownsville Events Center on Paredes Line Road. A prayer service will follow Thursday's viewing; funeral services will begin at 9 a.m. Friday under the direction of Darling Mouser Funeral Home in Brownsville.

Vela, a Harlingen native, served as a federal judge from 1980 to 2000 when he retired and received senior status.

As a senior judge, Vela traveled through the Southern District of Texas Region relieving the load of district judges hearing cases in Brownsville, McAllen and Laredo.

"Judge Vela was a great man. That's something you hear about a lot of people, but it's really true with him," said U.S. Magistrate John William Black of Brownsville, who first met Vela in 1965 when both were practicing attorneys.

"He had a lot of people appear before him but he never let himself be jaded by the fact he had handled so many cases," Black said.

"He looked at people as people, not as numbers or statistics.

"He was truly a great man and will be missed."

Vela graduated from St. Mary's School of Law in San Antonio in 1962. He practiced law in Harlingen and Brownsville from 1962 to 1974.

He served on the Brownsville City Commission from 1971 to 1973. He was a state district judge in Cameron County from 1975 to 1980.

In 1980, he was a candidate for the federal bench. U.S. Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, D-Texas, and former President Jimmy Carter nominated him. At the same time he was confirmed by the Senate as U.S. district judge for the Southern District of Texas.

In 2000, Vela opted to take senior status instead of retiring at age 65.

News of Vela's death spread quickly through the Southern District of Texas' U.S. District and Bankruptcy Courts.

The region covers the area from Houston to Brownsville.

"It's a very big personal loss, because he was a very good friend and a teacher and aide with regards to my taking on the role as a judge 21 years ago," said U.S. District Judge Ricardo Hinojosa of McAllen.

Hinojosa worked with Vela for more than four years in Brownsville federal courts before transferring to the McAllen federal courthouse.

"He would often joke with people that he and I were appointed by presidents from different parties but that when it came to judging we were one, because our constitution and our laws don't have partisan flavor," Hinojosa said.

Former President Ronald Reagan appointed Hinojosa.

It was just two months ago Vela was handling cases in federal court, Hinojosa said.

"He was still offering help as he always did."

Black said Vela was instrumental in getting a new federal courthouse built in Brownsville.

"He was the one that carried all of the water and did all the things that needed to be done to get it to happen," Black said. The U.S. Courthouse and Federal Building at Sixth and East Harrison streets was opened in 2001.

In 2003, U.S. Rep. Solomon P. Ortiz, D-Corpus Christi, renewed his efforts to get the new federal courthouse partially named after Vela and U.S. District Judge Reynaldo Garza.

This bill is pending.

About five years ago, the bill passed in the House but stalled in the U.S. Senate.

"South Texas lost a legend today with the passing of Judge Filemon Vela," Ortiz said in a prepared statement. "He was my friend, he was a hero and he was a judicial giant in the Rio Grande Valley."

Federal public defender Roland Dahlin of Houston said attorneys in Houston were saddened by the news of the judge's death. Many had worked with him on federal cases.

Beside attending court, Judge Vela routinely visited area schools, encouraging children to continue their education and to stay away from drugs.

He often administered the oath of citizenship to new U.S. citizens at citizenship ceremonies held across the Valley.

"He touched everybody in this city in his own way," said Raul Besteiro, Port of Brownsville director and a former colleague of Vela's at The University of Texas at Austin.

"He was always available to do things for people. He had a heart that was bigger than anybody else," Besteiro said.

"He did a great job with his family and his kids. And he was very proud that his wife (Blanca S. Vela) was mayor of this community."

"All I can say, he's passed the baton to us, and we have to make sure you put that baton ahead."

Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, R-Texas, described Vela as "a steadfast advocate for the rule of law."

"His leadership will be missed along the border and across the state," she said.

In lieu of flowers the Vela family asks that donations be made to the Vela Middle School Scholarship Fund 4905 Paredes Line Road, Brownsville, Texas 78520.

[From the Brownsville Herald]

FAMILY, FRIENDS PAY RESPECT TO JUDGE VELA (By Laura B. Martinez)

Carlos Vela stopped speaking in mid-sentence and listened to a student mariachi group play a tune.

Vela's eyes welled up. "That was his favorite song," he said. The song was "Laureles," a favorite of his brother, the late U.S. District Judge Filemon B. Vela.

Judge Vela died Tuesday, soon after arriving home from Houston where he was treated for stomach cancer. He was 68.

The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College Mariachi Escorpion performed the melody Thursday at the Brownsville Events Center, where a viewing was held for Judge Vela's body. A funeral service and burial is set for today.

The music was overwhelming for Carlos Vela, who listened briefly then walked to the main room at the Events Center.

"All the Velas like mariachi music," he said before slowly walking away.

Hundreds of mourners filed into the center to pay respect to the judge who has been referred to as a South Texas legend.

Many of those who attended Thursday's service worked at the U.S. District Courthouse in Brownsville, where Vela held court.

"He was a wonderful man," said Belia Zepeda, who works for the U.S. Marshals Service in Brownsville. "He was so respected, and everybody looked up to him."

While many attending Thursday's prayer service knew him as Judge Vela, to his nieces and nephews he was "Tio Filo."

"He was my uncle, my godfather and most importantly, my friend," said Manny Vela, one of the judge's numerous nieces and nephews.

Manny Vela said his uncle did not care whether someone was rich or poor, the color of one's skin or if an individual had a title with his or her name.

"He treated people with the respect and dignity that they were due," he said.

"I was blessed to be raised among giants. All my life I've been surrounded by family members living larger than life—people who do the right thing for the right reasons."

Also speaking at Thursday's service was Chief District Judge Hayden W. Head Jr. of Corpus Christi.

Head said he met Judge Vela in 1981 and formed a close friendship with him.

"Judge Vela was a wise judge who knew the law and knew it well," Head said. "But there was more to the senior judge."

"He had that connection with people. . . . He was compassionate when compassion was required and firm when it was needed."

SOUTH TEXAS LOST A GOOD MAN WITH THE DEATH OF JUDGE FILEMON VELA

U.S. District Judge Filemon Vela died at noon Tuesday as his plane landed at Valley International Airport in Harlingen. Judge Vela was stricken with stomach cancer two months ago and had been in treatment at M.D. Anderson Hospital in Houston since that time.

Judge Vela was a fair but strict judge who enforced this country's laws and sent thousands of criminal defendants to prison during his 29 years on the bench.

He was born in Harlingen in 1935 and lived with his parents and brothers, Moises, Robert and Carlos and his sister, who helped raise him after the death of his mother. His father was a notary public and had his office in the same building where the family ran a small grocery. The Vela family lived in Fair Park on the west side of Harlingen.

Moises and Carlos are also attorneys and Moises is a former Cameron County Judge and Harlingen municipal judge. Moises' son, Manny, is Cameron County Democratic Party Chairman.

Judge Vela was no product of affirmative action. His character was molded by his father who insisted that his children get an education. When St. Anthony Catholic

School opened, in 1948, Filemon and Carlos were among the first students signed up.

Filemon Vela graduated from Harlingen High School in 1954 and became a student at Texas Southmost College, Brownsville, where he was known for his quick wit and love of debate. He served in the U.S. Army from 1957 until 1959. After his army duty he enrolled in St. Mary's Law School, San Antonio, where he graduated in 1962. Although he didn't have the money to pay tuition he earned it by working in the cafeteria.

Upon graduation he practiced law in Harlingen for two years then moved to Brownsville where he practiced for 11 years, entering politics in 1971. Vela was a Brownsville City Commissioner from 1971-73 and was elected state district judge of the 107th court in 1975. In this capacity he presided over cases in Willacy County as well as in Cameron County.

In 1980 he was nominated by President Jimmy Carter to a federal judge seat in Brownsville being vacated by Judge Reynaldo Garza. He was confirmed by the Senate later that year and served until May 1, 2000 when he assumed senior status.

My family has known the Vela family since 1948. Judge Vela's brother, Moises, was my father's attorney and he was my mother's attorney. Judge Vela honored my family by swearing in my son, Dan, after he also graduated from St. Mary's Law School and passed the state bar exam. And while he was a student at St. Mary's, my son clerked for Judge Vela in Brownsville.

Some 50 years ago, my brothers and I camped with Filemon and Carlos Vela at Camp Perry, while in the Boy Scouts.

Recently Judge Vela hosted his 1949 St. Anthony School graduating class and gave his fellow classmates a tour of the new federal courthouse in Brownsville with dinner in Matamoros.

Filemon Vela was a good lawyer, a good judge, a Christian and a longtime friend. Our condolences go to his family, wife, Blanca, a daughter, and his son, Filemon, Jr., an attorney who practices in Corpus Christi.

The Editor

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA).

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 1402, the Garza-Vela United States Courthouse Designation Act offered by my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ).

This bill pays tribute to two great men, Federal Judge Reynaldo G. Garza and Federal Judge Filemon B. Vela, who were judicial legends in South Texas.

Judge Garza was the Nation's first Mexican American Federal district judge. Appointed to the Federal bench by President John F. Kennedy in 1961, Judge Reynaldo Garza served this Nation through the turbulent years of the civil rights movement. His decisions contributed to the changes that opened up many opportunities for minorities.

In 1976, President Carter asked him to serve as the Nation's Attorney General, but he declined because he did not want to leave his beloved South Texas and his service on the Federal bench.

He was committed to education, particularly in encouraging literacy, and he was known to all for the even-handed way in which he dispensed justice.

His last official act took place from his hospital bed when he officiated at

the swearing-in of his protege, Judge Ricardo H. Hinojosa as the new chairman of the Federal Sentencing Commission. When he passed away a few weeks ago at the age of 89, I was privileged to join the thousands of mourners in paying tribute to this outstanding and extraordinary pioneer.

I offer his wife Bertha and all his children and grandchildren my heartfelt condolences.

Judge Vela was nominated to the Federal bench by President Carter in 1980 and worked tirelessly to design and have built the new courthouse in Brownsville. It is indeed fitting that his name will be on this new Federal Courthouse.

Judge Vela, like his good friend Judge Garza, was known for his impeccable integrity and fairness on the bench. He also was passionate about teaching children about the law and the criminal justice system in order to encourage them to make the right choices in life. He would bring inmates to school to tell children about the mistakes they had made and the consequences they suffered as a result.

Judge Vela was often heard on the radio giving advice and counsel to parents and students on the importance of education. Like Judge Garza, he was also a mentor to many others in his profession.

We lost Judge Vela earlier this year. He is survived by his beautiful wife Blanca, and his three children, Filemon, Jr., Rafael, and Sylvia.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation in and honor these two great Americans for their service to this Nation.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to yield such time as he may consume to my friend the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GONZALEZ).

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me time, and I thank my colleagues for their assistance in getting this piece of legislation to the floor, and I hope it will successfully pass with very little difficulty.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the legislation, of course, but I do want to remind individuals, and I will be quick, because I know it has been a long evening and people have a lot of business, but I think Judges Vela and Garza deserve 1 minute of praise and recognition.

In 1961 when Judge Garza was first appointed, he was the first, as has already been pointed out, Mexican American Hispanic to be appointed to the Federal bench. It was the same year that my father was elected and he was the first Hispanic from Texas to have been elected to this House.

At that time, it was such a great celebration for all of us, but the truth was, we knew that they were the first, but we did not know they were not going to be the last. Things have not turned out that way, thank God.

But truly, to honor their legacies, I had the great benefit of being coun-

seled and mentored and lectured to by both Judge Vela and Judge Garza when I was a State district judge in Texas, and I know the lessons that they imparted are still with me today, and they would reverberate today in this Chamber if they had an opportunity to meet with us, members of that other branch of government, the legislative branch, they would remind us of that incredible but very important balance and separation of powers. And their legacies will only be recognized and their contributions will only be recognized to the extent that the other two branches of government, the executive and the legislative, understand their service in the context of this wonderful, wonderful concept that we have here in the United States, in our democracy, three equal branches of government, checks and balances and separation of powers.

So I know if they were here today, they would say, "Charlie, let us do our job. Let us go ahead and review what needs to be reviewed."

It is the collective wisdom of that branch of government that really gives this Nation great guidance, as well as the leadership in this House and the leadership in the White House.

So to judges Vela and Garza, to their families, proper recognition tonight, but hopefully that in the future we honor their memory and their hard work by respecting the work that they did within the context of this wonderful framework called the United States of America.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I urge our colleagues to support passage of the bill. I again want to congratulate the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON), and look forward to sporting a new Washington Delegates baseball cap in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATOURETTE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1402, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

The title of the bill was amended so as to read: "A bill to designate the United States courthouse located at the corner of Seventh Street and East Jackson Street in Brownsville, Texas, as the 'Reynaldo G. Garza and Filemon B. Vela United States Courthouse'."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LATOURETTE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within