



Christina Morales

State Representative • District 145
Harris County

September 5, 2024

Jackie Schuessler-Kimsey, City of Houston
Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Awards Committee
901 Bagby St
Houston, TX 77002

RE: Nominating Judge Richard Vara | Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Award Lifetime Achievement

Members of the Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Awards Committee:

It is with considerable admiration that I nominate Judge Richard Vara for the 2024 Mayor's Hispanic Heritage Awards in the Lifetime Achievement category. Judge Vara's lifetime of service and dedication to the Hispanic community of Houston makes him an exemplary candidate for this honor.

Judge Vara grew up in the East End neighborhoods of Magnolia and Denver Harbor, where his parents were active in LULAC, the Boy Scouts, and other civic organizations. His early exposure to civic duty, including accompanying his mother, Alicia, as she registered voters and collected poll taxes, laid the foundation for his deep commitment to public service. As a student, he attended President John F. Kennedy's address at Rice Stadium and remained active in youth organizations like the Boy Scouts and the CYO/CYA programs at Resurrection Church.

Judge Vara's educational journey through Pugh Elementary, McReynolds Junior High, Austin High School, the University of Houston, and South Texas College of Law further shaped his civic and leadership skills. He was involved in organizations such as PASO, Young Democrats, and participated in drama and debate, preparing him for a lifelong career in public service. His early political work as Assistant Treasurer for the Harris County Democratic Party in 1972 and as Coordinator for the Willie Velasquez Southwest Voter Registration Project demonstrated his commitment to empowering the Hispanic community.

In June 1974, Judge Vara became the youngest person ever elected as Justice of the Peace for Precinct 6, Position 1 at the time. He held this position for over 46 years, earning re-election numerous times and becoming one of the longest-serving justices in Harris County. His tenure was marked by innovative programs like Teen Courts and literacy initiatives, as well as his mentorship of students at all educational levels. Judge Vara also remained a staunch supporter of senior citizen programs, continuing his dedication to serving all generations of the community.

Beyond his judicial service, Judge Vara has been a founding member of significant community organizations, including the Chicano Family Center, Denver Harbor Senior Citizens, the SFA Alumni Organization, and the Felix and Angela Morales Foundation. His extensive volunteer work includes serving on boards for the Boy Scouts of America, the Mexican American Bar Association, the Fifth Ward Redevelopment Corporation, and many more. His dedication to these causes has left an enduring legacy across Houston.

Judge Vara is also a devoted family man, proud father of his children Ericka Gonzalez, Lenzy Chapa, and Anthony Vara, and grandfather to his two sons-in-law, Abel Gonzalez and Albert Chapa. Since his retirement in January 2020, he continues to reside in the East End, where he enjoys theater, dancing, cheering for the Astros, and golfing.

Judge Vara's lifetime of leadership, mentorship, and unwavering service to Houston's Hispanic community exemplifies the essence of this award. His contributions have left a lasting impact on countless lives, and it is with great honor that I recommend him for the Lifetime Achievement award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christina Morales". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Christina Morales
State Representative
Texas House District 145