FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: June 6, 2011
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CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas – Historically-valuable documents of former U.S. Rep. Solomon P. Ortiz (D–Corpus Christi) spanning more than a quarter-century career in Congress will be formally donated to Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi during a ceremony Thursday, June 16, at 10:30 a.m. in the Mary and Jeff Bell Library.

The collection for the Library’s permanent holdings of the Special Collections & Archives Department represents the first set of United States congressional papers acquired by Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. The papers include around 380 boxes of materials that document Ortiz’s many years in office and reflect his contributions to military, transportation, trade, natural resources, border security and other issues.

“Texas A&M-Corpus Christi is honored to be chosen as the repository of Congressman Ortiz’s papers chronicling his extensive career representing South Texas,” said University President Flavius Killebrew. “The donation of these papers is another contribution Ortiz has made toward higher learning. These documents will provide valuable primary research materials for students and advanced scholars from a variety of academic disciplines.”

The documents are important to the University as a research and educational resource, and will be available to use to write papers, articles, and books, and to produce film documentaries in the future, says Dr. Thomas Kreneck, head of the library’s Special Collections & Archives Department.

“The Congressman Solomon P. Ortiz Papers are a treasure of information on the history of our nation and region as seen through the services of a member of Congress for almost three decades,” said Kreneck. “They are especially poignant because of his perspective as the first Hispanic Congressman from his area.”

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Born June 3, 1937, Solomon P. Ortiz rose from humble South Texas beginnings to serve 28 years as a member of the House of Representatives for the 27th District of Texas. A Robstown, Texas, native, Ortiz was the son of Mexican immigrants. His father died when Ortiz was 16, forcing him to leave school to help support his mother. In 1960 he joined the United States Army, serving in Europe and training in the military police.

Returning to South Texas after the Army, he began in civilian public service by winning the election in 1964 as the first Hispanic to serve as Nueces County Constable. Four years later, he became the first Hispanic on the Nueces County Commissioners Court. In 1976 he won election as Sheriff of Nueces County, where he earned respect as a strong anti-drug law enforcement officer.

In 1982 Ortiz, who campaigned on education and job creation, won his first term to the U.S. House of Representatives when District 27 was created. He served on the House Armed Services Committee, working to enhance the country’s military preparedness and maintain the bases in his home district. Ortiz also became a member of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, co-chaired the House Depot Caucus, the Naval Mine Warfare Caucus, and the Border Caucus.

By the end of his service in 2010, he was the dean of the Texas House Democratic Delegation and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. He left office after the 2010 mid-term election.

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