



City of Chicago



R2022-322

Office of the City Clerk

Document Tracking Sheet

Meeting Date: 3/23/2022

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Type: Resolution

Title: Celebration of 100th birthday of late Mayor Harold Washington

Committee(s) Assignment:

SUSP



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

LORI E. LIGHTFOOT
MAYOR

March 23, 2022

TO THE HONORABLE, THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I transmit herewith, together with Alderman Ervin and the rest of the members of the Black Caucus, a resolution celebrating the 100th birthday of the late Mayor Harold Washington.

Your favorable consideration of this resolution will be appreciated.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lori E. Lightfoot".

Mayor

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, April 15, 2022 is the 100th anniversary of the birth of Harold Washington, native son of Chicago and the City's first Black mayor; and

WHEREAS, Raised in the Bronzeville neighborhood, Washington was a product of Chicago Public Schools, attending Forestville Elementary and DuSable High School, before being drafted into the U.S. Army in 1942; and

WHEREAS, Washington served in the 1887th Engineer Aviation Battalion, receiving several honors including the Meritorious Service Unit Award and the American Campaign Medal, before receiving an honorable discharge in 1946; and

WHEREAS, Upon returning to Chicago, Washington enrolled at Roosevelt College (now Roosevelt University), serving as president of the student council and leading various efforts including to ban racial restrictive covenants and to establish a national student bill of rights, before earning his Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1949; and

WHEREAS, Washington continued his education at the Northwestern University School of Law, where he was the only Black student in his class; and

WHEREAS, After graduating with his J.D. in 1952, Washington began his long career in public service, following in his recently-deceased father's footsteps as a precinct captain in the 3rd Ward and becoming an Assistant City Prosecutor (1954-58) and an arbitrator for the Illinois Industrial Commission (1960-64); and

WHEREAS, During the at-large election in 1965, Washington won his first election to the Illinois House of Representatives with the second highest vote total State-wide, where he served until 1976 when he was elected to the Illinois Senate, where he served until 1980; and

WHEREAS, Washington's legislative career in Springfield saw numerous accomplishments, including organizing the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus, establishing Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a State holiday, supporting the Afro-American Patrolman's League, and advocating on behalf of and strengthening the Fair Housing Act and Civil Rights Act of 1964; and

WHEREAS, In 1980, Washington was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives representing the 1st Congressional District; during his time in Congress, Washington successfully led the effort to extend the Voting Rights Act and led the opposition to deep cuts to social programs, before being overwhelmingly reelected in 1982 with 97% of the vote in the general election; and

WHEREAS, However, Washington's second term in Congress would come to an early end following his historic election as the first Black mayor of the City of Chicago, defeating the incumbent mayor and a future mayor in the process, with a broad and diverse coalition that generated record voter turnout; and

WHEREAS, As mayor, Washington's impacts on the City were profound, reforming political patronage practices and increasing the number of under-represented groups in City hiring and contracting, making City government more transparent, opening the City's budgeting process for public input and participation, establishing a City-wide cultural plan, and establishing several new City departments, including the City's first environmental-affairs department, a women's affairs commission, and the Ethics Commission; and

WHEREAS, Tragically, Mayor Washington's second term after reelection in 1987 was cut short by a fatal heart attack at his desk in City Hall on November 25, 1987; and

WHEREAS, The life and legacy of the People's Mayor is kept alive not only through the public spaces named in his honor, including the main branch of the Chicago Public Library, a City College, a cultural center in his neighborhood of Bronzeville, and a park across the street from his long-time home in Hyde Park, but also through those working to preserve his legacy, including the Mayor Harold Washington Legacy Committee; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and the Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, assembled this twenty-third day of March, 2022, do hereby designate April 15, 2022 as Harold Washington Day in honor of the life and legacy of the City's first Black Mayor – the People's Mayor; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to the Mayor Harold Washington Legacy Committee.

JASON C. ERVIN
Alderman, 28th Ward

STEPHANIE D. COLEMAN
Alderman, 16th Ward

PAT DOWELL
Alderman, 3rd Ward

SOPHIA D. KING
Alderman, 4th Ward

LESLIE A. HAIRSTON
Alderman, 5th Ward

RODERICK T. SAWYER
Alderman, 6th Ward

GREGORY I. MITCHELL
Alderman, 7th Ward

MICHELLE A. HARRIS
Alderman, 8th Ward

ANTHONY BEALE
Alderman, 9th Ward

DAVID H. MOORE
Alderman, 17th Ward

DERRICK G. CURTIS
Alderman, 18th Ward

JEANETTE B. TAYLOR
Alderman, 20th Ward

HOWARD BROOKINS, JR.
Alderman, 21st Ward

MICHAEL SCOTT, JR.
Alderman, 24th Ward

WALTER BURNETT, JR.
Alderman, 27th Ward

CHRIS TALIAFERRO
Alderman, 29th Ward

CARRIE M. AUSTIN
Alderman, 34th Ward

EMMA MITTS
Alderman, 37th Ward

MATTHEW J. MARTIN
Alderman, 47th Ward

MARIA E. HADDEN
Alderman, 49th Ward