



City of Chicago



R2018-188

Office of the City Clerk

Document Tracking Sheet

Meeting Date:	2/28/2018
Sponsor(s):	Sawyer (6)
Type:	Resolution
Title:	Tribute to late Honorable William Cousins, Jr.
Committee(s) Assignment:	

TRIBUTE TO THE HONORABLE WILLIAM COUSINS, JR.

WHEREAS, in His infinite wisdom, Almighty God has called His good and faithful servant, the Honorable William Cousins, Jr., after fourscore and ten years of a remarkable and well-spent life; and

WHEREAS, William Cousins, Jr. started life in the tiny central Mississippi cotton community of Swiftown in 1927. His family moved to Memphis, Tennessee when he was four and eventually to this city's South Side in 1938 where he attended Forestville Elementary School before graduating from DuSable High School in 1945. Cousins enrolled at the University of Illinois where he graduated with honors, receiving a Bachelor's degree in Political Science in 1948. He was admitted to four different law schools, Harvard, Yale, Columbia and Michigan, but matriculated at Harvard Law School where he received an LL.B. in 1951; and

WHEREAS, William Cousins, Jr. served his country in combat as lieutenant commissioned in the U.S. Army infantry during the Korean conflict from 1951 to 1953. He continued as an active army reservist for the next two decades and retired as a lieutenant colonel. While stationed in Japan, he met his wife, Hiroko. Their 52-year union, blessed with four children, Cheryl, Noel, Yul and Gail as well as four grandchildren, ended only in her passing in 2005; and

WHEREAS, in 1953, Cousins began his law career as an attorney for Chicago Title & Trust Co. He started his public service as an assistant state's attorney from 1957 until 1961. After leaving the States Attorney's office, Cousins and three other African-American attorneys, all Harvard Law School graduates, formed a law firm. Cousins devoted much of his time to community affairs and led the Chatham-Avalon Park Community Council in actively opposing high-rise housing in that neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, By the late 1960's, Cousins ran for a seat on Chicago's City Council with the slogan "unbowed, unbossered and unbought," and won, becoming the first black independent alderman from the 8th Ward. In 1976, he resigned from the council after he was elected a Cook County judge. In his best-known ruling, he declared Illinois' death penalty unconstitutional in 1979, more than 20 years before then-Gov. George Ryan declared a moratorium on capital punishment. Even after retirement as a judge, Cousins was called upon to serve on panels probing two 2003 disasters; the fire at the Cook County Administration Building that killed six and the E2 nightclub stampede where 21 persons lost their lives; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable Roderick T. Sawyer, Alderman of the 6th Ward, has informed this august body of the passing of this remarkably accomplished and well-respected attorney, legislator and jurist; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, That we the Mayor and members of the City of Chicago City Council, gathered together this 28th Day of February, 2018 AD, do hereby express our sincerest sorrow upon learning of the passing of the Honorable William Cousins, Jr. and extend our deepest sympathy to his family, friends and the many people whose lives he has touched.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be prepared and presented to his sons and daughters.



RODERICK T. SAWYER

Alderman – 6th Ward