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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

CITY OF CHICAGO

LORI E. LIGHTFOOT
MAYOR

March 24, 2021

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

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I transmit herewith, together with Aldermen Hadden, Osterman, Waguespack, Harris, Scott, Dowell, Lopez, Capplemann, Martin, Mitts, Rosa and Thompson, a memorial resolution honoring Robert T. Simpson, Jr.

Your favorable consideration of this resolution will be appreciated.

Very truly yours,

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The Members of this Body were deeply saddened to learn of the January 6, 2021, death of Robert T. "Bob" Simpson, Jr., an outstanding labor leader who dedicated a lifetime of service to labor union development and progressive causes; and

WHEREAS, Bob was born on December 1, 1934, in Elkhart, Illinois, to the late Robert T. Simpson, Sr., and Etta Claybrooks. After graduating from high school in 1952, Bob moved to Chicago and married the late Ann Bernice Clethen; and

WHEREAS, Following his move to Chicago, Bob became an employee at the Montgomery Ward & Co. Catalog House. He began organizing his fellow employees in 1953 and served as a union steward and member of the negotiating committee; and

WHEREAS, Bob put his union activities on hold for two years to serve in the United States Army Signal Corps. He was stationed in Germany as a communication specialist. Upon receiving an honorary discharge, Bob returned to Montgomery Ward in 1959; and

WHEREAS, The members of Teamsters Local 743 elected Bob as a trustee in 1962. He became Director of Organizing for Local 743 in 1966 and Recording Secretary in 1972. He was elected Vice President in 1984 and President in 1988, representing 23,000 members in what was, at the time, the largest local in the International Brotherhood of Teamsters; and

WHEREAS, Bob took on leadership roles locally and nationally with the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. In 1972, he was elected President of the Chicago Chapter of the CBTU, a position he held for over forty years. That same year, he was elected Corresponding Secretary and tapped to serve on the Executive Council of the International CBTU, a position he held until the time of his death; and

WHEREAS, Bob served as a national board member of Operation PUSH and as a board member of and spokesman for the Teamsters National Black Caucus. He was also actively involved with Little City, the NAACP, the A. Philip Randolph Institute, and the Coalition of Labor Union Women; and

WHEREAS, Continuing his legacy of supporting the Black workforce, Bob fought injustice by walking hundreds of picket lines and participating in protest efforts, ranging from demonstrations against apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s to support for Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter in the 2010s; and

WHEREAS, Bob spent his professional life improving the lives and livelihoods of working families by organizing workers into unions to fight for better workplaces and wages; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, gathered here this twenty-fourth day of March, 2021, do hereby honor the remarkable life and legacy of Robert T. Simpson, Jr., and extend our most heartfelt condolences to his family and friends; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be prepared and presented to the family of Robert T. Simpson, Jr., as a token of our honor, gratitude, and respect.