



Office of the City Clerk

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Legislation Text

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MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, God in His Infinite Wisdom has called Betty L. Smith, most beloved citizen, to her eternal reward on March 6, 2018; and

WHEREAS, This august body has been informed of her passing by the Honorable Carrie M. Austin, Alderman of the 34th Ward; and

WHEREAS, Betty, born on February 5, 1942 in Sandhill, Mississippi, was a devoted daughter of the late Dolly Mae Turnage and the late Sam Stewart. Believing in the value of education, Betty's parents enrolled her at the Piney Wood's Junior College, an all-Black boarding school considered to be an academic oasis in rural Mississippi. Upon her graduation, Betty relocated to Chicago, IL, leaving the comfort of home to forge a life of her own and further her education. She earned a certification as a respiratory Technician/Therapist and certificate in non-profit management from Roosevelt University; and

WHEREAS, Betty met the love of her life, (the late) Vannish E. Smith, her adored husband of 47 years. They were blessed with two daughters, Vanessa and Valerie. Family was the center of Betty's life. She was a nurturing, caring, and doting mother with strong morals, believing that family fellowship was important and education was essential; and

WHEREAS, Betty accepted Christ at an early age and a longtime member of Chatham-Avalon Church of Christ. She shepherded her children through dedicated service to their church and becoming a faithful servant of God. She embraced the Pastor's teaching and enjoyed the music of the choir; and

WHEREAS, While employed as a respiratory specialist at various hospitals, including Presbyterian-St. Luke (now Rush) hospital, Betty became acutely aware of the countless Black men dying of HIV. But more alarming to her was that these patients were alone with no support. It was then she founded the "South Side Help Center (SSHC)", a non-for-profit community base organization, with the goal of educating African American religious community on HIV/AIDS in order to negate the stigma and spread of the virus. Throughout the years, her husband, daughters, other family members and friends worked with her to build the success and sustainability of SSHC the oldest African American led community based organization serving the city of Chicago and State of Illinois; and

WHEREAS, Throughout her twenty one years as Executive Director of SSHC, Betty was bestowed numerous prestigious accolades and awards and featured in several publications, including the Chicago Sun time, Tribune, Defender, Washington Post and Essence Magazine. Betty retired in 2008 passing the torch to her daughter Vanessa. Even though she was battling Alzheimer's disease, Betty continued to do television interview and make appearances in the support of the South Side Help Center; and

WHEREAS, Betty strongly believed in giving back to the community. Pained by the loss of her daughter, Valerie, Betty established the "Valerie Smith-Reid Scholarship Fund". This scholarship tribute in her daughter's name provided thousands of dollars in scholarships to high school seniors to assist with first year college expenses. For more than a decade, Betty

organized many fundraisers to benefit at risk African American youth. She was a sincere giver; and

WHEREAS, Betty valued serving people in need. After her retirement, she spent many hours during the week volunteering in the Chicago Food Depository/Food Bank program at her church. There was no judgement, only the joy of helping those less fortunate; and

WHEREAS, Betty leaves to cherish her memory; her daughter, Vanessa; her very special grandson, Aaron; two great-grandchildren, Aaron Jr. and Aris; siblings, Elex (Lileann), Willie Steward, Pearl Stewart, Margie (Charles) Ross, Brenda Campbell (Walter) Jenkins; Jackson, MS; Hattie McGinty, Glen Bumie, MD, Linda (Lloyd) Robinson, and Maryland Thompson along with a host of nieces, nephews, extended family and treasured friends; and

WHEREAS, Betty touched the lives of all who knew her through her sharp wit, mellow voice, gentle kindness, generosity and vivacious spirit. She will be deeply missed, but the memory of her character, intelligence and compassion will live on in those who knew and loved her, now, therefore

Be It Resolved, That we, the Mayor and members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, gathered here this twenty eighth day of March 2018, A.D., do hereby express our sorrow on the death of Betty L. Smith and express to her family and friends our deepest sympathy; and

Be It Further Resolved, That a suitable copy of this resolution be prepared and presented to the family of Betty L. Smith as a token of our honor, gratitude and respect.

CARRIE M. AUSTIN Alderman, 34th Ward