



# Office of the City Clerk

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## Legislation Text

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### **MEMORIAL RESOLUTION FOR MATTIE L. GATES**

WHEREAS, Almighty God, in his infinite wisdom and judgment, has called to eternal rest Mattie L. Gates; and

WHEREAS, This august body has been informed of her passing by the Honorable Carrie M. Austin, Alderman of the 34<sup>th</sup> Ward and Chairman of the Committee on Budget and Government Operations; and

WHEREAS, Born on February 7, 1928, to loving parents, the late Julia Brisker and Douglas Hurt, Mattie was raised in Penfield, Georgia, along with her four siblings. Mattie would recall that one of her fondest childhood memories was cooking in the kitchen with her grandma. Mattie shelled peas, picked string beans, and learned to make cakes from scratch. These were the roots of what would become a lifelong love of cooking; and

WHEREAS, As a young woman, Mattie, and three of her siblings, were a part of this country's great migration that brought thousands of African Americans from the south to settle in communities on Chicago's south side. When settled in Chicago, Mattie's\* sister, Dee, brought home twin friends, Raymond and Richard, for a visit. Sparks flew between Raymond and Mattie and the two fell in love, married, and were blessed with seven children; and

WHEREAS, Mattie raised her family in Chicago during a turbulent time in this nation's history when many people were engaged in championing important civil rights in America. While riots broke out across the nation, including many in Chicago, Mattie focused on family, but was also active in her community and opened the family home to those in need; and

WHEREAS, Mattie was a strong woman by nature. She was well known throughout her life for living by the motto, "Don't be nobody's fool." Among the many family stories that are a testament to this, one that stands out occurred while she worked second shift for the Zenith Corporation. As the story goes, one night while coming home from work on the #126 Jackson bus, a man mistook Mattie for a "fool" and put his hand in her purse in an effort to steal her wallet. He didn't know Mattie kept her tools in her purse and her wallet in her pocket. When she discovered what was happening, she cursed and slapped him from the front of the bus to the back. The passengers looked on and stepped out of the way. The bus driver opened the back door, and the would-be-thief jumped off and ran; and

WHEREAS, Mattie continued to manifest her strong and independent spirit when she moved her daughters and oldest granddaughter to Chicago's south side. She formed the first Block Club in the neighborhood. Mattie was the "eyes and ears" on the block, whatever the problem, she knew how to get things done. Someone was always seeking her assistance or some words of wisdom. Mattie galvanized the people in the community to want better and to do better; and

WHEREAS, Mattie was an excellent cook. She lived by two rules in the kitchen: take your time and cook with love. Mattie made almost all of her dishes from scratch and was the family chef for all holiday dinners until, in later years, her arthritis set in. Mattie's cakes were so popular, that she turned cake-baking into a part-time

business; and

WHEREAS, Mattie also had the gift of a "green thumb". Her colorful flower beds and perfectly manicured lawn were constant conversation pieces in the neighborhood. The words "get off my grass" were heard so often from her, that local community members instinctively knew better than to step on her grass; and

WHEREAS, Mattie adored her family was always their fierce protector. She was not afraid to defend them against anyone who threatened to bring any one of them harm. She also intuitively found different ways to individually connect with each of her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. She was famed for being so attuned to her family, that she knew if someone was sick or in trouble before they shared the news with her directly. As an example, a dream about fish meant somebody was pregnant; and

WHEREAS, Mattie consistently instilled in her family a love of learning and a strong work ethic. While Mattie achieved an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education, she successfully raised a family who earned Bachelors, Masters, PhD, and MD degrees, and who are each changing the world in their respective fields; and

WHEREAS, Governing all else in her life, Mattie had a strong belief in God and the power of prayer. She was active in the church, serving as an usher and working in the kitchen. When she stopped physically attending church, she watched church programs, faithfully tuning in from the comfort of her bed. Mattie prayed unceasingly and her faith never wavered. Instead, it fueled her equanimity as a leader in her home and community. No matter what battle she faced, when asked how she was doing, her response was always, "I'm cool"; and

WHEREAS, Mattie leaves to cherish her memories and carry on her strong legacy: her children, Raymond (Susan), Linda (Billy), Earnest; Debra; and Stephanie; grandchildren, Rhonda, Sabrina, Steven (Jetaun), Khalilah (Theo), LaNita (BJ), Racquel (Kenny), Brandon (Ashley), Marcus, and Jasmine; her great grandchildren; Jahari, Bryce, Solomon, Luke, Layla and Elijah; a niece, Georgia; a nephew, Harold; a lifelong friend, John; a bonus sister and partner in crime, Esther; and a host of other family and friends. She was preceded in death by two of her children, Julia and Stephen; and

WHEREAS, "Queen Mattie", as she was known, touched the lives of many through her kindness, generosity, and vivacious spirit. She will be deeply missed, but her unique character, and the loving, faithful, determined, and compassionate way she lived her life, will continue to inspire those who knew and loved her; now and therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, gathered here this thirteenth day of March, 2019, do hereby express our sorrow on the death of Mattie L. Gates 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 Mattie L. Gates as a token of our honor, gratitude and respect.

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**CARRIE M. AUSTIN Alderman,  
34<sup>th</sup> Ward**