



Office of the City Clerk

City Hall
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Legislation Text

File #: R2022-925, **Version:** 1

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Ramsey E. Lewis Jr. has been called to eternal life by the wisdom of God at the age of 87; and

WHEREAS, The Chicago City Council has been informed of his passing by Alderman Edward M. Burke; and

WHEREAS, Ramsey is survived by his loving wife Janet Lewis, daughters Denise Jeffries and Dawn Allain (Michael), sons Kendall Kelly Lewis, Frayne Lewis (Julctta), and Bobby Lewis (Crystal), grandchildren Apryl Daniels (Dennis), Regan Lewis, Kris Jeffries (Nailah), Joshua Allain, June]] Lewis, Malachi Lewis, Aja Alain, Jordan Lewis, Ramsey Lewis IV, Dorien Olson-Lewis, Miyoshie Lewis, Meshach Lewis, Taylor Lewis, Kevai Lewis, Frayne Lewis Jr., Niya Lewis, and Asia Lewis, greatgrandchildren Jalen Simmons, Dennis Daniels III, Omari Jackson, nieces Paula Jackson and Kimberly Johnson, and nephew James Johnson, and was predeceased by his sons Ramsey Lewis III and Kevyn Lewis; and

WHEREAS, Ramsey was born in Chicago on May 27, 1935 to Ramsey E. Lewis Sr. and Pauline Lewis; and

WHEREAS, Growing up in the Cabrini Green housing project, he began piano lessons at age four and played piano at church, where his father was choir director. A jazz fan who played lots of Duke Ellington and Art Tatum at home and took his son to jazz concerts, Ramsey's father encouraged him to embrace that music; and

WHEREAS, Ramsey attended Jenner Elementary School and was a graduate of Wells High School, and at the Chicago Music College Preparatory School, he began studying with Dorothy Mendelsohn, and he credited her with teaching him how to listen with his inner ear and introducing him to Bach, Beethoven and Chopin. Dorothy also entered him in competitions and recitals; and

WHEREAS, When Ramsey was a freshman at Wells High School, Wallace Burton asked Ramsey to join his band, the Clefs, a septet of collegians that blended jazz and R&B; and

WHEREAS, After the Clefs broke up due to the Korean War, the three members Ramsey, Eldee Young, and Redd Holt who didn't get drafted formed what would become known as the classic Ramsey Lewis Trio; and

WHEREAS, In 1956, the new band released their first album, Ramsey Lewis and His Gentlemen of Jazz, on the Chess label. Three years later, Ramsey was invited to perform with the trio at Birdland in New York; and

WHEREAS, In 1965, Ramsey broke through with the early crossover smash, "The Iri Crowd" winning a

Grammy,- and was followed by two more chart-toppers, "Hang on Sloopy" and "Wade in the Water"; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, Ramsey has performed and recorded in a remarkable variety of musical settings; and

WHEREAS, Among his many honors were five honorary doctorate degrees and an NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Jazz Artist, The in Crowd single was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame, his personal memorabilia reside at the Smithsonian Institution, he received a 2007 National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master Award, which placed him in the hallowed company of such piano legends as Ahmad Jamal, Chick Corea, McCoy Tyner, Dr. Billy Taylor, and Cecil Taylor; and

WHEREAS, In his late eighties, Ramsey still connected with younger generations with his monthly Saturday Salon livestream series, produced during the pandemic by his wife; and

WHEREAS, His forthcoming album/The Beatles Songbook: The Saturday Salon Series, Volume One, which will be released November 11, 2022; by Steele Records, was drawn from the livestream performances, and Ramsey also spent the last year of his life working on his memoir Gentleman of Jazz with his co-writer Aaron Cohen. The book will be released via Blackstone Publishing in 2023; and

WHEREAS, To his beloved family, Ramsey imparts a legacy of generosity, compassion, devotion to family and unwavering faith in God; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and the members of the Chicago City Council, assembled this twenty-first day of September, 2022, do hereby commemorate Ramsey for his grace-filled life and do hereby express our condolences to his family; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Ramsey E. Lewis Jr.

Edwar-H"M. Burke Alderman, 14* Ward