



Office of City Clerk

City Council Document Tracking Sheet

City Hall
121 North LaSalle Street
Room 107
Chicago, IL 60602
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Matter ID: R2023-0005295

Meeting Date: 10/16/2023

Sponsor(s): Taliaferro (29) *

Type: Resolution

Title: Call to rename conference room 201A as "The Honorable Harold Washington Meeting Room"

Committee Assignment: Committee on Committees and Rules

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The Honorable Harold Washington left a lasting legacy in the City of Chicago, Harold Washington, native son of Chicago and the City's first Black mayor; and,

WHEREAS, Raised in the Bronzeville neighborhood, Washington was a product of Chicago Public Schools, attending Forestville Elementary and DuSable High School, before being drafted into the U.S. Army in 1942; and

WHEREAS, Upon returning to Chicago, Washington enrolled at Roosevelt College (now Roosevelt University), where he earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1949; and

WHEREAS, Washington continued his education at the Northwestern University School of Law, where he was the only Black student in his class; and

WHEREAS, After graduating with his J.D. in 1952, Washington began his long career in public service, following in his recently-deceased father's footsteps as a precinct captain in the 3rd Ward and becoming an Assistant City Prosecutor (1954-58) and an arbitrator for the Illinois Industrial Commission (1960-64); and

WHEREAS, During the at-large election in 1965, Washington won his first election to the Illinois House of Representatives with the second highest vote total State-wide, where he served until 1976 when he was elected to the Illinois Senate, where he served until 1980; and

WHEREAS, Washington's legislative career in Springfield saw numerous accomplishments, including organizing the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus, establishing Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a State holiday, supporting the Afro-American Patrolman's League, and advocating on behalf of and strengthening the Fair Housing Act and Civil Rights Act of 1964; and

WHEREAS, In 1980, Washington was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives representing the 1st Congressional District; during his time in Congress, Washington successfully led the effort to extend the Voting Rights Act and led the opposition to deep cuts to social programs, before being overwhelmingly reelected in 1982 with 97% of the vote in the general election; and

WHEREAS, However, Washington's second term in Congress would come to an early end following his historic election as the first Black mayor of the City of Chicago, defeating the incumbent mayor and a future mayor in the process, with a broad and diverse coalition that generated record voter turnout; and

WHEREAS, As mayor, Washington's impacts on the City were profound, reforming political patronage practices and increasing the number of under-represented groups in City hiring and contracting, making City government more transparent, opening the City's budgeting process

for public input and participation, establishing a City-wide cultural plan, and establishing several new City departments, including the City's first environmental-affairs department, a women's affairs commission, and the Ethics Commission; and

WHEREAS, Tragically, Mayor Washington's second term after reelection in 1987 was cut short by a fatal heart attack at his desk in City Hall on November 25, 1987; and

WHEREAS, The life and legacy of the People's Mayor is kept alive not only through the public spaces named in his honor, including the main branch of the Chicago Public Library, a City College, a cultural center in his neighborhood of Bronzeville, and a park across the street from his long-time home in Hyde Park, but also through those working to preserve his legacy, including the Mayor Harold Washington Legacy Committee; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and the Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, assembled this sixteenth day of October, 2023, do hereby designate Conference Room 201A to be renamed hereby, "The Honorable Harold Washington Meeting Room" and that the Department of Cultural Affairs Special Events commission a portrait of him to be displayed in said room; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to the Mayor Harold Washington Legacy Committee.


CHRISTOPHER TALIAFERRO
Alderman – 29th Ward