



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 16-1903, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING THE 90th BIRTHDAY OF THE HONORABLE ABNER MIKVA

WHEREAS, on January 21, 2016 Abner Mikva celebrated his 90th birthday. Joining in the celebration were countless citizens of Cook County and the United States who have, over the years, honored his distinguished legal career and life-long commitment to social justice. Numerous admirers and well-wishers celebrated a man who has served with distinction in top positions in every branch of government; and

WHEREAS, Abner Mikva was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Abner Mikva attended the University of Chicago Law School, from which he received his Juris Doctorate in 1951. After graduation he clerked for United States Supreme Court Justice Sherman Minton; and

WHEREAS, Abner Mikva spent ten years in the Illinois House of Representatives. While in Springfield he pushed for fair housing laws and for reforms of the state criminal code. Next, the voters elected him to the United States Congress. He first represented the 2nd District covering Hyde Park and later the 10th district covering the north suburbs of Chicago in the United States Congress; and

WHEREAS, Abner Mikva's sound wisdom and advise is regularly sought locally, nationally and globally. He was nominated by President Jimmy Carter to the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals where he served until his retirement from the court as chief judge. As a judge on the D.C. Circuit, he ardently defended free speech and consumer rights in his opinions, and he was among the first to reject the discriminatory Justice Department policy of expelling openly gay service members, long before this view was politically popular. Throughout his career, Mikva consistently promoted issues concerning social justice and the public welfare; and

WHEREAS, Abner Mikva left the bench to become White House Counsel to President Bill Clinton; and

WHEREAS, Abner Mikva was selected to a special committee to investigate a tragic fire in 2003 at the Cook County Administration Building; six employees were trapped in smoke-filled stairwells by doors that locked behind them; and

WHEREAS, Abner Mikva was an international election monitor of Ukraine's contested presidential election and was named chair of the Illinois Human Rights Commission by the governor of Illinois; and

WHEREAS Abner Mikva helped shape the next generation of lawyers through teaching law at Northwestern University School of Law. He later returned to the University of Chicago Law School, where he served as the Schwarz Lecturer and the senior director of the Mandel Legal Aid Clinic; and

WHEREAS, Abner Mikva and his wife Zoe started a civic leadership program called Mikva Challenge, which challenges high school students throughout the Chicagoland area to be active participants in the political process through elections, community problem solving, and policy-making programs. Thousands of high school students get deeply involved in the democratic process working as election judges, volunteering on campaigns, advising city officials, and creating local activism projects to improve their schools and communities; and

WHEREAS, Abner Mikva and his wife Zoe are the proud parents of three extraordinarily accomplished daughters who have each continued the family's proud legacy of commitment to service. Laurie Mikva was nominated by President

Obama to be a board member at the Legal Services Corporation and is Clinical Assistant Professor of Law at Northwestern University School of Law. Mary Mikva is a Cook County Circuit Court Judge and former law clerk to United States Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, Jr. and U.S. District Court Judge Prentice Marshall. Dr. Rachel Mikva is a congregational rabbi and is the Rabbi Herman E. Schaalman Associate Professor of Jewish Studies and Director of the Center for Jewish, Christian and Islamic Studies at the Chicago Theological Seminary; and

WHEREAS, Abner Mikva's accomplishments and recognitions are so numerous they would fill volumes and he is routinely singled out for distinction and honors. In addition to many others, he received the Chicago History Museum "Making History Award" for Distinction in Public Service. He received the Thurgood Marshall Award from the American Bar Association. He was named a Legal Legend by the Chicago Lawyer Chapter of the American Constitution Society. He and his wife, Zoe received the 2005 Public Humanities Award from the Illinois Humanities Council; and

WHEREAS, Abner Mikva received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama on November 24, 2014. The Presidential Medal of Freedom is an award bestowed by the President of the United States and is the highest civilian award of the United States. It recognizes those individuals who have made an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of Cook County, on behalf of the 5.2 million residents of Cook County takes great pleasure in honoring and celebrating the 90th birthday, hard work and many history-making accomplishments of Abner Mikva and herewith expresses its sincere gratitude for the invaluable contributions he has made to the citizens of Cook County, Illinois; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a suitable copy of this Resolution be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and that an official copy of the same be tendered to Abner Mikva in honor of his 90th Birthday.