



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING THE LIFE AND WORK OF COOK COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE ABISHI C. (A.C.) CUNNINGHAM, JR.

WHEREAS, the Honorable Abishi C. (A.C.) Cunningham, Jr. was born in West Virginia. His father, Abishi C. Cunningham, Sr. was the first African-American student to attend and graduate from the University of Iowa Law School. Judge Cunningham was raised in West Virginia along with his sister, Marjorie Laws, who is also a judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County. After graduating from Fisk University with a Bachelor of Science in 1969 and from Northwestern University School of Law with a Juris Doctorate in 1972, Judge Cunningham became a member of the Illinois Bar; and

WHEREAS, Judge Cunningham first worked as legal advisor to the Illinois State Superintendent of Public Instruction. One year later, he joined the Cook County State's Attorney's office as a felony trial assistant. Judge Cunningham subsequently served as Chief of the Vertical Prosecutions Unit; and

WHEREAS, after leaving the State's Attorney's office in 1976, Judge Cunningham joined the Criminal Defense Consortium of Cook County as a Supervisor of that organization's Lawndale office. Judge Cunningham subsequently rejoined the Office of the Cook County State's Attorney, where he supervised 40 Assistant States Attorneys responsible for prosecuting all criminal misdemeanor and quasi-criminal cases in the City of Chicago, as well as advising the office on legislative issues; and

WHEREAS, Judge Cunningham joined the Cook County Circuit Court bench in 1986. He served as a judge until 2009. During his time on the bench, he presided over thousands of bench trials, hundreds of jury trials, and was appointed by the Chief Judge to mentor newly appointed and elected judges. His last judicial assignment was in the Law Division, where he presided over an array of civil matters; and

WHEREAS, on April 1, 2009, after being appointed by then County Board President, Todd Stroger, Judge Cunningham was sworn into the office of Public Defender of Cook County by his sister and Presiding Judge of the Sixth Municipal District, Hon. Marjorie Laws. During his six-year term as Public Defender, Judge Cunningham diligently carried out his mission to uphold the Constitutions of the United States of America and the State of Illinois; and protect the rights, liberties, and dignities of every person his office was appointed to represent; and

WHEREAS, Judge Cunningham is certified in Comprehensive Mediation in the State of Illinois. He has been an adjunct professor in the Political Science Department at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and was also an adjunct professor at the DePaul University School of Law and the John Marshall School of Law. His professional affiliations included membership in the American Bar Association, the National Bar Association, the Cook County Bar Association, the National Lawyers Guild, the Chicago Bar Association, the Illinois Public Defender Association, and the National Legal Aid and Defender Association.

WHEREAS, Judge Cunningham is survived by his daughter Theodora Cunningham. He has served the residents of Cook County in literally every aspect of the court justice system. He was universally respected and will be missed by his colleagues and friends alike.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of Cook County, on behalf of the 5.2 million residents of Cook County, honors the life, work, and contributions of the Honorable Abishi C. Cunningham, Jr.,

and herewith expresses its sincere gratitude for the invaluable contributions he 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 same be tendered to the daughter of the Honorable Abishi C. Cunningham, Jr.