



# Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL

## Legislation Text

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### PROPOSED RESOLUTION

#### RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF CLARENCE N. WOOD, JR.

**WHEREAS**, Clarence N Wood, Jr. was born April 14, 1940 in Birmingham, Alabama to Dr. Clarence N Wood, Sr and Lucille Fleming Wood. As a child, Mr. Wood and his parents spent a time on their family farm in Sulligent, Alabama and summers in Chicago with family. Mr. Wood grew up in the Jim Crow South and was keenly aware of the racial injustices of the South. Mr. Wood also knew the key role education played to change the negative narrative of the South; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Wood attended Carrie C. Tuggle elementary school and A.H. Parker high school in Birmingham and was an early entrant to Fisk University at age 15. Mr. Wood studied Law at the University of Iowa Law School on a scholarship provided by the State of Alabama designed to prevent black people from attending southern white universities; and

**WHEREAS**, driven by the outrageous racial inequities he witnessed in his youth, Mr. Wood joined the vanguard in the fight for civil rights, served as a beacon of hope for countless people, and advocated for people who are unseen; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Wood began his early career in the Public and Child Welfare Division, laying the foundation for a lifetime dedicated to the welfare of the most vulnerable. Mr. Wood was the first African American group worker with the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago exemplifying his commitment to building bridges across communities. Mr. Wood's journey with the National Urban League began in 1964 and epitomized his passionate commitment, which spanned nearly a quarter of a century.

**WHEREAS**, in 1967, at age 27 in the midst of the tumult of the Civil Rights Movement, Mr. Wood answered the call to return to Birmingham to spearhead the Urban League's fight for equity in his home state. Mr. Wood became Vice President of Field Operations, and later Vice President for External Affairs for Birmingham's Urban League chapter. Subsequently, Mr. Wood transferred to the Louisville Urban League where he met Joan Miller. Mr. Wood and Joan Miller wed in 1970 and moved to Akron, Ohio. In 1972, the Woods were blessed with the birth of their beloved daughter Carole.

**WHEREAS**, in 1974, Mr. Wood and his family relocated to Chicago to be surrounded by family and friends. In 1977, the Woods would again relocate to New Rochelle, New York where they would spend the next decade of their lives.

**WHEREAS**, in 1988, Mr. Wood came back to Chicago and became the founding president of the Chicago Community Trust's Human Relations Foundation. Mr. Wood used his love of people and understanding of human nature to sow seeds of unity across the City of Chicago's vibrant but divided communities. Mr. Wood's vision of a tapestry of diverse threads woven into a single fabric of communal harmony guided his efforts. In 1988, Mr. Wood took on the role of managing the Community Trust's Human Relations Task Force, a diverse committee of civic leaders convened to address racial, ethnic, and religious tensions in the Chicago Metro area. Under Mr. Wood's leadership, the foundation became a cornerstone of hope and a catalyst for change, embodying the ideals of equity and understanding that he held dear.

**WHEREAS**, Clarence N. Wood was a steadfast ally of Chicago's LGBT community. Mr. Wood served for eighteen years as the head of the Chicago Commission on Human Relations (hereinafter, the "Commission") making him the longest-tenured department head during the six terms of Mayor Richard M. Daley; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Wood's family experiences, including having a close family member who is openly gay, as well as,

serving on the national board of Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, contributed to his understanding and support of LGBT issues. Additionally, Mr. Wood had a proprietary role at the Jeffery Pub, the oldest gay bar in the Chicago community; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Wood was instrumental in protecting LGBT rights and supporting LGBT community institutions, such as the Commission's former Advisory Council on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues (hereinafter, the "Advisory Council") and the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Wood's support for the LGBT community went beyond mere "lip service" and proclamations, as he was present at city events honoring LGBT veterans and made sure other communities represented at the commission understood why LGBT individuals deserve an equal place at the table; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2007, Mr. Wood demonstrated his commitment to LGBT rights by strongly supporting the Advisory Council's protest of an appearance by reggae singer Buju Banton at an event in Washington Park, and insisting the City of Chicago's government and the City of Chicago's Park District dissociate themselves from the event; and

**WHEREAS**, under Mr. Wood's leadership, the Hall of Fame was created as the first such municipally sponsored institution in the world and served as its president and CEO at the Jane Addams Hull House Association. Mr. Wood missed only one induction ceremony during his sixteen-year tenure; and

**WHEREAS**, upon Mr. Wood's retirement, Clarence continued his fight for justice and equality. Mr. Wood remained active in the Chicago Community, specifically with his Fisk lunch group, as a member of Beta Boule, and The Druids Club of Chicago. Mr. Wood continued his advocacy and mentorship, contributing to academia and serving on boards. He was immensely proud of his role in helping co-found and lead the Coalition of African American Leaders (COAL). When Mr. Wood was not engaged in solving Chicago issues, Mr. Wood enjoyed spending time at his beloved "Owls Nest" in Laporte, IN where he was close to nature; and

**WHEREAS**, Mr. Wood was a dedicated family man and spent hours at stables and shows with Carole as she pursued her passion for horses. Mr. Wood and Joan hosted and attended wonderful dinner and cocktail parties with people like Ozzie Davis and Ruby Dee. Mr. Wood loved to travel and visited several countries throughout his life with his family. Despite moving, Mr. Wood treasured his many relationships and worked to stay connected to people. Mr. Wood was a connector; he never met a stranger and was always willing to lend a helping hand. Mr. Wood is preceded in death by his wife, Joan Carole Miller-Wood. Mr. Wood is survived by his beloved daughter, Carole Wood, son-in-law Carl Jenkins, partner Leisa Mosley, grand-dog Dorsey, and a host of cousins and friends; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, President Toni Preckwinkle, and the Cook County Board of Commissioners, on behalf of the residents of Cook County, do hereby honor Clarence N. Wood for his dedication to the fight for civil rights, the City of Chicago, and the LGBT community. His unwavering support and advocacy helped to promote equality and understanding for all residents of Chicago. We are proud to recognize him as a Friend of the Community in the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, WE, BILL LOWRY, COOK COUNTY COMMISSIONER of the 3rd. DISTRICT AND TONI PRECKWINKLE, PRESIDENT of the Cook County BOARD OF COMMISSIONER, do hereby stand, and salute the life of Clarence N. Wood.**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, a suitable copy of this Resolution will be presented to the family members of Clarence N. Wood.

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED: a copy of this Resolution will be filed within the Office of Cook County Commissioner Bill Lowry 3rd. District.**