



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING THE PIONEERING SPIRIT OF DAVID F. JAMES, CIVIL RIGHTS CHAMPION, ATTORNEY AND TUSKEGEE AIRMAN

WHEREAS, David F. James, an exceptional man whose life was devoted to family, social justice and his community died at the age of 92 leaving behind a devoted family, countless friends and a community profoundly enriched for having known him; and

WHEREAS, David James represented the best qualities of citizenship and humanity through his tireless work breaking down barriers. He will long be remembered for making history on numerous fronts; he was the first African-American salesperson hired by the electronics company Burroughs, first African-American attorney hired by the American Bar Association, and the first African-American home owner in Winnetka; and

WHEREAS, David F. James was born in 1923 in St. Louis, Missouri to William and Ada James who instilled in their children strong values of service, education and dedication to community

WHEREAS, David James was not satisfied with simply making history for himself, his dedication to justice and equality drove him to create organizations devoted to breaking down the barriers for others. James and his wife, Mary, established Together We Influence Growth (TWIG) Day Camp that brings together children from South Side neighborhoods and children from the North Shore. James was also a founding member of the North Shore Interfaith Housing Council now called Open Communities, which is organized to fight housing discrimination; and

WHEREAS, Mr. James grew up on the south side of Chicago and attended Lane Tech High School where he developed a fondness for aviation. Afterwards, he attended Loyola University. During his freshman year in college James joined the Army. Because the Army was racially segregated he was forced to go to the only training facility for black pilots at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. He flew in numerous bombing missions with the 332nd Fighter Group over Germany and Eastern Europe and by the end of his tour obtained the rank of Lieutenant; and

WHEREAS, after he returned from fighting the war in Europe, David James dedicated himself to fighting for civil rights at home. He helped coordinate the North Shore Summer Project's 1965 rally on the Winnetka Village Green featuring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and in 2007, 42 years to the day of that historic time and on the same spot, he was a part of the dedication of a monument to Dr. King and the movement that galvanized thousands; and

WHEREAS, David James graduated from Loyola University with a Bachelor of Arts degree and was hired by business machine manufacturer Burroughs Corporation; he became the company's first African-American salesman. James later worked with the University of Chicago before he was appointed as a deputy director with the State of Illinois. While there, part of his responsibilities involved working on the "War on Poverty." James later graduated from DePaul University College of Law with his Juris Doctorate degree; and

WHEREAS, David James not only was the first African-American hired by the American Bar Association he later became its director; and

WHEREAS, David James served as an administrative law judge for the United States Department of Labor. He later went into private practice as an attorney and remained there until 2000; and

WHEREAS, David F. James, along with more than one hundred other Tuskegee Airmen, attended the Inauguration Ceremony of President Barack Obama; and

WHEREAS, David James is a longtime member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Winnetka; he frequently traveled to Haiti as a member of the Sacred Heart's mission delegation. It was at Friendship House, a Catholic center in Chicago where David James met his future wife, Mary Galloway, who had graduated from the University of Wisconsin law school and was, like him, committed to institutional change and social equality; and

WHEREAS, the impact felt by the loss of David F. James is significant and has left a tremendous void in the community. His loss will be felt most acutely by his three surviving siblings, six children, David, Mary, Peter, Cathy, Tom, and Ann,, and numerous grandchildren ; 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 commemorates the extraordinary life of David F. James, 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 the family of David James that his memory may be so honored.