



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 18-4504, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING THE LIFE AND MEMORY OF THE HONORABLE GEORGE N. LEIGHTON

WHEREAS, the Honorable George Neves Leighton, née Leitão, was born on October 22, 191 in New Bedford, Massachusetts to Ana Silva Garcia and António Neves Leitão; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable George N. Leighton's surname was changed to Leighton after an elementary school teacher claimed she could not pronounce Leitão; and

WHEREAS, he was raised in New Bedford and Cape Cod, Massachusetts, where as a child he worked picking cranberries and blueberries with his parents; and

WHEREAS, agricultural work limited his educational studies, only completing up to the 7th grade before leaving at the age of 17 to work on an oil tanker sailing to the Dutch West Indies; and

WHEREAS, despite never completing high school, the Honorable George N. Leighton used his free time reading and also attended night school; and

WHEREAS, with great perseverance and skills, he won a scholarship competition and was admitted to Howard University in 1936, graduating magna cum laude four years later; and

WHEREAS, in 1940, he was drafted into military service where he became Captain of Infantry before being relieved of active duty in 1945; and

WHEREAS, upon his return, he attended Harvard University Law School and earned a Bachelor of Laws degree in 1946; and

WHEREAS, soon after graduation, the Honorable George N. Leighton and his wife, Virginia Berry Quivers, moved to Chicago, Illinois; and

WHEREAS, after passing the Illinois Bar exam in 1947, he quickly rose within the legal and African-American community as an attorney who fought for equality in voting rights, the school system and housing; and

WHEREAS, one of his most notable civil rights cases was advising an African-American family it was their constitutional right to move to a predominantly white neighborhood in Cicero, Illinois; and

WHEREAS, the case sparked a race riot and shed light on housing inequalities the African-American community faced; and

WHEREAS, in 1951, he co-founded Moore, Ming, and Leighton which became one of the largest predominantly African-American law firms in the nation; and

WHEREAS, in 1969, he was assigned to sit as a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals in Illinois' First District; and

WHEREAS, in 1976, President Gerald Ford nominated him to serve as a U.S. District Court judge; and

WHEREAS, after retiring from the U.S. District Court, he continued working at the firm Langdon Neal until his retirement at age 99; and

WHEREAS, on June 29, 2012, the Cook County courthouse located at 26th and California was renamed “The Honorable George N. Leighton Criminal Court Building” in honor of his legal career as a civil rights attorney; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable George N. Leighton was an exemplary leader, judge, humanitarian and civil rights advocate who contributed to the improvement of the community in Cook County and everywhere he went; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable George N. Leighton passed away on June 6, 2018 in Brockton, Massachusetts; and

WHEREAS, he is survived by two daughters, Virginia Anne and Barbara Elaine, five grandchildren and eight great grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable George N. Leighton will be sorely missed by friends, family and colleagues throughout Cook County; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, that the President and the Cook County Board of Commissioners, on behalf of the residents of Cook County, hereby offer its deepest condolences and most heartfelt sympathy to the family of the Honorable George N. Leighton and honor the life and memory of this outstanding leader.