



# Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 18-6401, **Version:** 1

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### **PROPOSED RESOLUTION**

#### **COMMEMORATING THE EXCEPTIONAL LIFE AND MANY TRAILBLAZING ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF EVANSTON MAYOR LORRAINE HAIRSTON MORTON**

**WHEREAS**, Lorraine Hairston Morton, dedicated community advocate, lifelong educator, groundbreaking teacher and principal and much beloved mayor of the City of Evanston died at the age of 99 leaving behind a devoted family, countless friends and a community profoundly enriched for having known her; and

**WHEREAS**, Lorraine H. Morton was the beloved mayor of Evanston, who served from 1993 to 2009, she was also the city's first African-American mayor, she was the city's first Democratic mayor and was the longest-serving mayor; and

**WHEREAS**, Lorraine H. Morton was born in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, the youngest child of Keziah Hairston, a schoolteacher, and William Patrick Hairston, a prosperous businessman who helped found the Winston Mutual Life Insurance Company, which is still operated as the Golden Gate Insurance Company; and

**WHEREAS**, Lorraine H. Morton received a bachelor degree in education from Winston-Salem State University and a master's degree in education from Northwestern University. She met her husband, Dr. James T. Morton, Jr., as a graduate student at Northwestern University. After she was married, she and her husband moved to Tuskegee, Alabama, where he worked with the Tuskegee Airmen; and

**WHEREAS**, she moved back to Evanston in 1953, when her husband began working as a clinical psychologist with the Veteran's Administration and at Evanston Hospital; and

**WHEREAS**, Lorraine H. Morton will long be remembered for spearheading the desegregation of Evanston's public schools as a teacher and school principal. She was one of the first teachers to break the color barrier at Nichols Middle School, at a time when Evanston was integrated statistically, but not geographically. She championed desegregation efforts and demanded equity in all Evanston's schools. She was the first African-American principal at Haven Middle School. Under her watch, Haven was a pioneering school for educational enrichment. As principal, the school thrived and she developed a national reputation for her wisdom and leadership; and

**WHEREAS**, Lorraine H. Morton was appointed and then elected Alderman of the Fifth Ward, a position she held for nearly a decade. As a member of the Evanston City Council, she tirelessly served on countless committees and was later elected Evanston's Mayor; and

**WHEREAS**, one of her chief goals as a Northwestern alum was to improve the town-gown relationship between Northwestern University and the greater population of Evanston. She worked very hard and successfully forged a close friendship with Northwestern University president Henry Bienen; and

**WHEREAS**, Lorraine H. Morton's time as mayor ushered in a new era for Evanston, one that improved the community immeasurably. She was the model of respect and principled leadership and the community became a more welcoming and inclusive place because of the example she set. On the night she was elected she noted: "First of all, I think my victory shows that this town will support a person without regard to race or sex..." "My immediate response will be to set a tone that will bring people together." She did; and

**WHEREAS**, Lorraine H. Morton, as Mayor, viewed Evanston as a classroom and she was the town's Principal; and

**WHEREAS**, Lorraine H. Morton was regularly singled out for recognition by institutions of higher learning and had scholarships named in her honor. Winston-Salem State University created the Lorraine Hairston Morton Endowed Scholarship in 2010 for students majoring in education who are committed to community service and Northwestern University provides a scholarship in her name for the Master of Science in Education Program in the School of Education and Social Policy; and

**WHEREAS**, Lorraine H. Morton received countless community awards and recognitions. Northwestern presented her with an Alumni Merit Award and bestowed an honorary doctorate upon her. She also held an honorary doctorate for public service from Kendall College. In addition, she held the position of Vice President of the Evanston Historical Society and received community service awards from Saint Francis Hospital of Evanston and the Evanston Arts Council; and

**WHEREAS**, through her long life Evanston treasured Lorraine H. Morton and she was often publicly thanked for her many contributions. One of her more visible recognitions and one of the most lasting took place in 2009 when Evanston's civic center was renamed for her when she retired; it is now known as the Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center; and

**WHEREAS**, in June of this year, more than a hundred people gathered with Lorraine H. Morton at the Northwestern University Segal Visitors Center to celebrate the premier of the film documentary "Lorraine H. Morton: A Life Worthwhile." The film takes its title from one of Morton's last quotes in the movie, advice from her father, who helped guide her in life and one which she exemplified: "Only a life of service is a life worthwhile."; and

**WHEREAS**, Evanston has lost a great friend and champion in Lorraine H. Morton and her loss will be felt deeply. She is survived by her daughter, Elizabeth Morton Brasher, and two granddaughters, Elizabeth Keziah Brasher and Constance Moriah Brasher; 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 Lorraine Hairston Morton, and herewith expresses its sincere gratitude for the invaluable and innumerable contributions she 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 Lorraine Hairston Morton.