



# Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 18-6955, **Version:** 1

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### PROPOSED RESOLUTION

#### COMMEMORATING THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF RONALD C. SMITH

**WHEREAS**, Ronald C. Smith, Professor Emeritus at The John Marshall Law School, U.S. Navy veteran, public servant, criminal and constitutional law scholar, and a leader in his profession, died at the age of 84 leaving behind family, countless friends, and a community enriched for having known him; and

**WHEREAS**, Ronald C. Smith was born in Chicago on December 9, 1933. He graduated from Fenwick High School in Oak Park in 1951 and received a B.S. in the Humanities from Loyola University in Chicago in 1955; and

**WHEREAS**, Ronald C. Smith served his country from 1956-1962 as a naval helicopter pilot and personnel officer. He left active duty to enter law school but remained a naval reservist until retiring as a Lt. Commander in 1977. While in the Navy, Ron, a “seadog” with bright red hair, acquired the nickname “Red Dog,” a name that followed him for the rest of his life; and

**WHEREAS**, after graduating from Loyola Law School in 1965, Ronald C. Smith clerked for Justice John V. McCormick of the Illinois Appellate Court. During that year, Ron was hired as an adjunct professor in the legal writing program at John Marshall Law School, beginning his career-long association with the school.

**WHEREAS**, Ronald C. Smith served as a legal counsel for the Santa Fe Railroad from 1966-1968, specializing in governmental regulation and administrative procedure. He joined John Marshall full-time in 1968, where he specialized in constitutional law and criminal law until he retired in 2014; and

**WHEREAS**, Ronald C. Smith will be remembered for his commitment to independence and ethics in politics. In 1969, Ron ran for a seat as a delegate to the Illinois Constitutional Convention against a candidate backed by the regular Cook County Democratic Party. He won that seat and was aligned with an “independent bloc” of about ten delegates, which included his fellow law professor, Dawn Clark Netsch. He served as a member of the Committee on the Executive, where he sponsored the amendatory veto provision; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1972, Ronald C. Smith ran for the Democratic nomination for the Illinois State Senate. Party regulars conspired to deprive him of the seat by running a candidate against him who would win, but then resign the nomination in favor of a replacement chosen by the party. In response, he did what any law professor would do - he sued. His lawsuit, *Smith v. Cherry*, 489 F.2d 1098 (1974) was a leading federal elections lawsuit on dirty tricks until legislation addressed the situation; and

**WHEREAS**, Ronald C. Smith continued public service as a member of Governor Dan Walker’s Ethics Board, among other positions; and

**WHEREAS**, Ronald C. Smith acted as legal counsel for his wife, Mary Ann Smith - retired 48<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman, in her many campaigns for the 48<sup>th</sup> Ward Aldermanic seat; and

**WHEREAS**, Ronald C. Smith was a tireless advocate for a fair and just legal system. While at John Marshall, he continued to practice criminal law. In the 1970s he served as an assistant state’s attorney during the summer, prosecuting cases for the Cook County State’s Attorney. Later, he represented indigent defendants, often those who were not

knowledgeable in English or the American legal system; and

**WHEREAS**, his work with the criminal justice sections of multiple bar associations culminated in his election to the chairmanship of the American Bar Association's Criminal Justice Section in 2001. During that year he was often the voice of the A.B.A. on anti-terrorism activities and international criminal justice; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1991, Ronald C. Smith founded the National Criminal Justice Trial Advocacy Competition, co-sponsored by John Marshall Law School and the American Bar Association. Teams from all over the world have participated in this award-winning and path-breaking exercise in training future prosecutors and defense attorneys; and

**WHEREAS**, the loss of Ronald C. Smith to the community is significant. He will be remembered as someone devoted to making Illinois a better place to live, to securing justice for everyone, and to preparing law students to enter the noble profession that he loved. He will be missed by countless friends, family, and neighbors. His loss will be felt most acutely by his wife of forty-seven years Mary Ann Smith; his sons, Michael (Liv Rainey) Smith and Matthew (Carolyn Chandler) Smith; his goddaughter, Margaret Thompson Blumberg, and his cousins Philip, Jonathan, and Mark Thompson; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners on behalf of the nearly the 5.2 million residents of Cook County commemorates the extraordinary life of Ronald C. Smith, and herewith expresses its sincere gratitude for the invaluable contributions he has made to the legal profession and Citizens of Cook County, Illinois; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this text be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and a suitable copy of same be tendered to the family of Ronald C. Smith, that his memory may be so honored.