



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 19-1940, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION HONORING JERRY T. JONES FOR HIS DISTINGUISHED LIFE AND CAREER

WHEREAS, Jerry T. Jones (born JT Jones) was born on March 25, 1936 in Sledge, Mississippi by way of a midwife; and

WHEREAS, Sledge was predominantly white and more affluent than Falcon where his mother lived, and which was occupied almost entirely by Black people; however, businesses in Falcon were Black owned including a cotton gin, in fact his father in addition to being the man in charge of the local cotton gin operation also owned a restaurant called a “juke joint” and the differences between the two towns had a profound influence on Jerry’s perception of life; and

WHEREAS, when JT was eight years old, his uncle gave him a battery powered radio and he was immediately fascinated by the ability to listen to music and other programs from places as far away as Helena, Arkansas; His interest was so great that at the age of eight, he declared that he was going to make radios when he grew up; and

WHEREAS, in the summer of 1949, JT and his parents migrated from Sledge to Chicago because JT, at the age of twelve, had endured an increasing amount of threats from the white community on his life; and

WHEREAS, when JT made it to Chicago, he enrolled at Wendell Phillips high School, located on Chicago's South Side at 39th Street and Prairie Avenue, which served as a bedrock education for JT and he graduated at 16 years old in 1952 as the youngest person in his class; and

WHEREAS, in the fall of 1952, JT enrolled at the University of Illinois at Navy Pier, which was only a 2-year college at that time, so after finishing there, JT enrolled in night school at the Illinois Institute of Technology’s Chicago campus to continue his education; and

WHEREAS, throughout his college years, JT landed several jobs that were very instrumental to his life; His first job was as a draftsman at Western Electric, which was a subsidiary of AT&T; After a year, JT was able to apply for a job at Argonne National Laboratory, which is owned by the US Department of Energy, but is operated by the University of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, after working for two years in the Chemical Engineering Division at Argonne Laboratory, he was offered a job at the Illinois Institute of Technology Research Institute (IITRI) and while working at IITRI’s Chemical Engineering Division and later their Physics Division, JT received his degree from the Illinois Institute of Technology with concentrations in physics and electrical engineering; and

WHEREAS, during JT’s time at the IITRI, he also became active in the civil rights movement, including participating in the historic march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama and he also became active in local politics, becoming a precinct Captain in the neighborhood he lived; and

WHEREAS, one of JT’s main objectives was to provide jobs for Black men and women on the South Side of Chicago, and so in March of 1966, JT started Soncraft, an engineering and manufacturing company on the Chicago’s South Side; JT’s dreams began to come into focus and in 1970, Jerry was awarded the Illinois Small Businessman of the Year award and later would go on to win the largest government contract ever awarded to a small business in 1982 with an estimated value of approximately \$300 Million; and

WHEREAS, while President and CEO of Sonicraft, JT also sat on the Board of Trustees at IIT, the National Business League, formerly the National Negro Business League, which was founded by Booker T. Washington in 1900, the Advisory Board of the U.S. Secretary of Treasury, the Regional and National Advisory Boards of the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Advisory Council of the NCAAP. and was also a founder and chairmen of the National Association of Black Manufacturers, which sought to create and foster the development of Black owned businesses, later joining the Board of the National Association of Manufacturers and became a board member of the Chicago Association of Commerce; and

WHEREAS, beginning in the basement of JT's house, Sonicraft was truly a family affair as Jerry's step father Robert worked at Sonicraft until he retired; JT's son Jerome worked in Sales and Business Development; His son Bertrand worked in Legislative Affairs and Business Development, while his daughter Lara was employed in Human Resources Management, and together they helped grow the company to employ over 500 people; and

WHEREAS, JT currently lives in Lynwood, IL in the 6th Cook County District and remains active in the community;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the President and Members of the Cook County Board of Commissioners proudly honors Jerry T. Jones for his distinguished and trailblazing career and for his service to the community, the City of Chicago and to Cook County; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, this text be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and a suitable copy be presented to Jerry T. Jones.