



# Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 21-1131, **Version:** 1

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### **PROPOSED RESOLUTION**

#### **SALUTING THE HONORABLE RICHARD THEODORE GREENER AS THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN TO GRADUATE FROM HARVARD IN 1870**

**WHEREAS**, in 1905 Richard Greener began his residency here in our Great City of Chicago and departed on May 2, 1922; and

**WHEREAS**, Richard Greener was born in Philadelphia, PA on January 30, 1844; he quit school in his mid-teens to earn money for his family, but one of his employers helped him enroll in preparatory school at Oberlin College; he graduated from Phillips Academy in 1865 and spent three years at Oberlin College before transferring to Harvard College; his admission to Harvard was “an experiment” by the administration and paved the way for more black graduates of Harvard; he graduated from Harvard in 1870; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1875, Richard Greener became the first African American to be elected as a member of the American Philological Association; he graduated from law school at South Carolina University and practiced law in South Carolina and then Washington, DC before joining the Howard University School of Law as a professor and eventually dean; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1875, Richard Greener was chosen by the General Assembly of South Carolina to be a member of a commission to revise the South Carolina school system, and in 1880, he became a law clerk of the first Comptroller of the United States Treasury; from 1876 to 1879, he represented South Carolina in the Union League of America and was President of the South Carolina Republican Association in 1887; from 1885 to 1892, he served as Secretary of the Grant Monument Association, where he is credited with having led the initial fundraising effort that eventually brought in donations from 90,000 people worldwide to construct Grant’s Tomb, still the largest mausoleum in North America; from 1885 to 1890, he was Chief Examiner of the Civil Service Board for New York City and County; in the 1896 election, he served as the head of the Colored Bureau of the National Republican Party in Chicago; in 1898, he was appointed as the United States Commercial Agent in Vladivostok, Russia; he left the foreign service in 1905; and

**WHEREAS**, Richard Greener received several awards and recognitions; while at Harvard in 1868 and 1870, he earned the Bowdoin Prize; he received two honorary Doctorates of Law, one from Monrovia College in Liberia in 1882 and the other from Howard University in 1907; in 1902, the Chinese government decorated him with the Order of the Double Dragon; Phillips Academy has the Richard T. Greener 1865 Endowment Scholarship; the University of South Carolina’s Black Alumni Council sponsors the Richard T. Greener Endowment Fund; the central quadrangle at Phillips Academy was named in his honor in 2018, and the University of South Carolina has erected a statue honoring his legacy; and

**WHEREAS**, Richard Greener eventually settled in Chicago, where he worked for an insurance company and practiced law and occasionally lectured on his life and times; his Harvard diploma and other personal papers were rediscovered in an attic on the South Side of Chicago in 2009; and

**WHEREAS**, the President and members of the Cook County Board of Commissioners are pleased to honor the legacy of Richard Greener where this great man paved the way for many in our Cook County of Illinois and departed on May 2, 1922;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the President and Members of the Cook County Board of Commissioners, on behalf of the residents of Cook County, honor the birthdate of the Honorable Richard Theodore

Greener on January 30, 2021 as Richard Theodore Greener Day in Cook County; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this text be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and a copy be presented to Dr. Anthony L. Green, Direct Descendant of Richard Theodore Greener as a symbol of our respect and esteem.