



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 23-2841, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING THE LIFE OF WILLIS EVERETT (BILL) PENNINGTON JR.

WHEREAS, Almighty God in His infinite wisdom called from our midst Willis Everett (Bill) Pennington Jr. on April 30th, 2023 at the age of 75; and

WHEREAS, Bill was born in Richmond, Indiana, on June 12, 1948, the eldest of eight children born to the late Willis E. Pennington Sr. and Deloris Cottman Pennington; and

WHEREAS, Bill loved his childhood and was so proud of his hometown, Richmond, and his humble beginnings. He also loved his family immensely, and as the big brother, Bill was always the sibling his younger ones could rely on and was their confidant, best friend, advocate, and sought his counsel for almost everything since he was considered the cool, calm, and collected one; and

WHEREAS, Bill excelled while attending grammar and high schools. He was a member of the Richmond High School track and field team, and to this day, he still holds track and field records there; and

WHEREAS, Bill graduated from Richmond High in 1967 and joined the U.S. Army. Bill served in the Vietnam War in the 1st Cavalry Division from 1968-1970, and while serving, he received the Army Commendation Medal and Good Conduct Medal along with several other honors; and

WHEREAS, after Vietnam, he briefly attended Earlham College in Richmond before later transferring to Howard University in Washington, D.C. It was at Howard in Locke Hall that Bill "locked" eyes with the love of his life, Queenie, and the two still remembered the room number and seats they sat in when they met in a public speaking class; and

WHEREAS, while at Howard, he was a member of various organizations on campus including Phi Alpha Theta - Zeta Gamma Chapter Honor Society, the Association of Veteran Students and the Political Science Society and Bill graduated from Howard with a bachelor's degree in history and international relations; and

WHEREAS, soon after, Bill and Queenie moved to Chicago, Illinois and married on April 12 in Montgomery, Alabama. To this union, four children were born: Willis Everett III, Chyla Elise, Kristin Carrielle and Jonathan Michael; and

WHEREAS, Bill was a corporate man working for CNA Insurance and understood the importance of education, hard work, and leadership; he was the company's only African American Re-Insurance Executive. During his time at CNA, Bill served in various roles including reinsurance contract negotiations and treaty drafting, attorney malpractice, accountant professional liability, directors and officer's liability, and Latin American Property and Casualty Insurance Treaties and retired in 2010; and

WHEREAS, even though Bill attained great success in the business world, he never missed his children's athletic games or their academic ceremonies, and when his children became parents, Bill brought that same proud energy while attending his grandson Aiden's basketball games, cheering him on, clapping enthusiastically, "Go, Aiden! Hustle son!"; and

WHEREAS, despite retiring, Bill was always an advocate for change, and as a natural leader, Bill ran for a Village

Trustee post in Olympia Fields, Illinois, in 2006 and served four terms. During his 16 years as a village trustee, Bill served as Chairman of the finance committee and Trustee liaison to the planning and going commission, and Trustee liaison at the Village of Olympia Fields Veterans Commission; and

WHEREAS, as a family man, he was a part of the "Jack Pack" with other dads in the South Suburban Chicago Chapter of Jack and Jill of America. Upon moving to Olympia Fields, the family became members of Calvary Baptist Church in nearby Glenwood, and as a member, Bill joined the men's choir and became a trusted advisor for church business. He was elected as a Church trustee and served on the Pastor Search Committee; and

WHEREAS, Bill also served on the board of directors for finance at the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation, where he co-developed the Village Long Range Financial Model "The 2040 Plan."; and

WHEREAS, anyone who knew Bill knew he loved having a good time. He often hosted card parties and attended dinner dances and loved stepping (Chicago style, of course) with his beloved Queenie. Bill also possessed a great singing voice and enjoyed singing gospel tunes. He also was a history buff who took great interest in his family's genealogy; and

WHEREAS, Bill was a longtime member of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity and a charter member of Delta Sigma Boule, where he served as the chapter's treasurer. In addition, he was a member of the National Association of Guardsmen and the Chicago Assembly, where he served as secretary and treasurer for the latter; and

WHEREAS, Bill leaves behind to cherish his memory and continue his everlasting legacy, his beloved wife, Queenie, and his devoted children, Willis Everett III, Dr. Chyla Elise, Kristin Carrielle and Jonathan Michael; three loving grandchildren, Aiden Pennington, and Carrielle and Bradley Edwards; three sisters, Rebecca Watkins, Luvenia Sue (Eugene) and Evelyn Tate (John); sisters-in-law Valeria Burris (Alfred), Denise Pennington and Tracy Pennington; and a host of favorite nieces, favorite nephews and loving cousins. Bill also leaves behind many friends and most notably the men and woman he spent countless hours within his organizations;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the President and Members of the Cook County Board of Commissioners does hereby offer its deepest condolences and heartfelt sympathy to the family and loved ones of Willis Everett (Bill) Pennington Jr.; 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 the family of Willis Everett (Bill) Pennington Jr. so that his memory may be so honored and ever cherished.