

2013-J4659

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Basil A. Paterson, renowned public servant, distinguished citizen, and devoted member of his community

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to mourn publicly the death of certain prominent individuals whose valued contributions to their community, their profession, and their heritage served to enhance the quality of life in the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, It is with feelings of great sorrow and deepest regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Basil A. Paterson, renowned public servant, distinguished citizen, and devoted member of his community, on Wednesday, April 16, 2014, at the age of 87; and

WHEREAS, A lawyer, labor negotiator and federal mediator who also served as a member of the New York State Senate, a deputy mayor and New York's secretary of state, Basil A. Paterson's purposeful life and civic endeavors were unerringly directed to serving the needs of his fellow human beings; and

WHEREAS, The father of former Governor David A. Paterson, Basil A. Paterson will be long remembered for his trailblazing efforts that helped pave the way for a new generation of African American political leaders, as well as for his dedication to opening doors for African American businesses in New York City; and

WHEREAS, Basil Alexander Paterson was born in Manhattan on April 27, 1926, to Caribbean immigrants, Leonard and Evangeline Rondon Paterson; he grew up in Harlem, graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School in 1942 and enrolled at St. John's University; and

WHEREAS, Basil A. Paterson interrupted his college career to serve his country for two years in the United States Army during World War II; after the war, he returned to St. John's University where he earned a

bachelor's degree in biology in 1948, and a law degree in 1951; he set up a legal practice in Harlem; and

WHEREAS, Passionately committed to civic engagement and the empowerment of his community, Basil A. Paterson joined several civic and community organizations, including the Harlem branch of the NAACP where he served as President in 1964 which fostered his immersion into local politics; by the early 1960s, he was a member of the politically influential "Gang of Four" alongside David Dinkins, who would become the first African-American mayor of New York City, United States Representative Charles Rangel, and civil rights activist and entrepreneur Percy Sutton, who became the longest-serving Manhattan Borough President; together, they forged a powerful base that helped to select and elect many black candidates for legislative and executive offices; and

WHEREAS, Basil A. Paterson was appointed to the New York State Senate in 1965, representing Manhattan's Upper West Side and Harlem; during his tenure, this esteemed man championed many issues important to his district and to the State of New York including co-founding the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus and spearheading, along with other members of the Caucus, special programs geared to providing higher education assistance to minority students such as SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge) and HEOP (Higher Education Opportunity Program) which continues to aid minority students today; and

WHEREAS, In 1970, Basil A. Paterson gave up his Senate Seat to run for Lieutenant Governor of New York as the running mate of former United States Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg; he was the first major-party black candidate for this post; and

WHEREAS, In 1978, Basil A. Paterson was appointed a Deputy Mayor of New York City, however he stepped down from this position in 1979 to become Secretary of State of New York, the first African American person to have held the post, and served until 1982; from 1989 to 1995, he

served as Commissioner of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey;
and

WHEREAS, Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Basil A. Paterson became increasingly involved in labor relations, mediating dozens of disputes, including the end of a 46-day strike against scores of private nonprofit hospitals and nursing homes in New York City in 1984; in later years he joined the law firm Meyer, Suozzi, English & Klein, specializing in labor law; and

WHEREAS, This wise man also taught at the State University of New York at New Paltz, Fordham University and Hunter College, giving countless students the benefit of his many years of experience; and

WHEREAS, Basil A. Paterson was sincerely loved and greatly respected by all those with whom he worked; committed to his community, the people he represented, his State, and his Nation, he served his public with dignity, dedication and incisive wisdom; and

WHEREAS, Over a long and meritorious life of service on behalf of others, Basil A. Paterson was a man of action, of integrity, and of commitment, whose true compassion was generously given to all who knew him; and

WHEREAS, He is survived by his wife of 60 years, the former Portia Hairston; his two sons, David and Daniel; and five grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Basil A. Paterson leaves behind a tremendous legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all he served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Basil A. Paterson, renowned public servant, distinguished citizen, and devoted member of his community; and be it further
RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Basil A. Paterson.