

2015-J5570

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION celebrating the life and distinguished career of Retired New York State Supreme Court Judge Harold L. Wood

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to mourn publicly the death of prominent citizens of the State of New York whose lifework and civic endeavor served to enhance the reputation of the State; and

WHEREAS, It is with feelings of deepest regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Retired New York State Supreme Court Judge Harold L. Wood, noting the significance of the loss of a man whose altruistic spirit will be greatly missed; and

WHEREAS, Judge Harold L. Wood, the first black member of the legislative body of Westchester County, New York, and later the first black State Supreme Court justice in the county, died on Thursday, April 14, 2016, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, at the age of 96; and

WHEREAS, Born on December 6, 1919, in Bridgeport, Connecticut, to James and Harriet Bannister Wood, Harold L. Wood and his family later moved to Ossining, New York; and

WHEREAS, After graduating from Ossining High School in 1937, Harold L. Wood attended Lincoln University in Missouri, one of the historically black universities; working his way through college, he earned his Bachelor's degree in Political Science in May of 1942; in that same year, he married his wife, the former Thelma Cheatham; and

WHEREAS, From 1941-1946, Harold L. Wood proudly served his country as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force; he was stationed in the United States and saw service at various military installations including Tuskegee Air Base in Alabama and bases in Maine, Michigan, Kentucky, and New York; and

WHEREAS, After his discharge, Harold L. Wood furthered his education by receiving his Master's degree in Law from the Cornell University Law

School; and

WHEREAS, After completing his education, Harold L. Wood was employed by the New York State Department of Labor in Mount Vernon, New York; in 1949, he formed a law partnership, and subsequently, entered politics; and

WHEREAS, In 1957, Harold L. Wood was one of five individuals from Mount Vernon selected for the Westchester County Board of Supervisors; and

WHEREAS, For two years, Harold L. Wood served as a Legislative Assistant to a New York State Senator, and in 1969, Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller appointed him to the New York State Family Court, the first time an African American had been appointed from Westchester County; shortly thereafter, he was elected to a five-year term; and

WHEREAS, A legal scholar with a keen mind, good judgment and, above all, an unfaltering sense of justice and fairness, Judge Harold L. Wood was then elected to the Westchester County Court, and later, to the New York State Supreme Court, where he served with distinction for over two decades; and

WHEREAS, After retiring from the New York State Supreme Court on January 1, 1996, he served for several years as a Judicial Hearing Officer, hearing and settling Supreme Court Cases; he then held the position of Hearing Officer for the New York State and Local Retirement Systems; and

WHEREAS, After his much deserved retirement, Judge Harold L. Wood enjoyed watching and playing sports, especially tennis, and was a member of the Harlem Yacht Club; and

WHEREAS, Judge Harold L. Wood set an example for all individuals by exemplifying what it means to give of oneself; he was a beautiful light in the lives of all those with whom he came in contact; and

WHEREAS, Predeceased by his wife, Thelma, Judge Harold L. Wood is survived by his two sons, Gregory Lance and Dean Christopher; his daughter, Laverne Jill; three grandchildren, Natasha, Michael and Lauren; one

great-grandchild, and a brother, Robert; as well as many nieces and nephews; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit, imbued with a sense of compassion, and comforted by a loving family, Judge Harold L. Wood's life was a portrait of service, a 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 celebrate the life and distinguished career of Retired New York State Supreme Court Judge Harold L. Wood; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Retired New York State Supreme Court Judge Harold L. Wood.