

METROPOLITAN WATER RECLAMATION DISTRICT *of* GREATER CHICAGO
RESOLUTION

SPONSORED *by the* BOARD of COMMISSIONERS RECOGNIZING *the*

100th BIRTHDAY *of*
HAROLD WASHINGTON

WHEREAS, Harold Lee Washington was born on April 15, 1922 in Chicago, Illinois to Roy Lee and Bertha Washington. His father was an attorney, a Methodist minister, and one of the first Black precinct captains in the City of Chicago, while his mother was a well-known singer; and

WHEREAS, as a youth, Mr. Washington attended Forestville Elementary School and DuSable High School, both of which at that time were segregated. During his junior year of high school at DuSable, Mr. Washington quit school to work at a meat-packing factory. A short time later, his father helped him to obtain a job at the United States Treasury office in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, in 1942, Mr. Washington was drafted into the United States Army into a segregated unit of the Air Force Engineers (at the time, this unit was located within the Army). He served three years overseas, where he attained the rank of First Sergeant; and

WHEREAS, upon returning to Chicago in 1945, Mr. Washington decided to complete his education. He attended Roosevelt University, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science in 1949, and Northwestern School of Law, where he earned his Juris Doctorate degree in 1952. He was the only Black student in his class; and

WHEREAS, following graduation, Mr. Washington worked in private practice with

his father. He was later employed at the City of Chicago Department of Law, where he worked as an assistant prosecutor from 1954 to 1958. In 1960, he was hired as an arbitrator for the Illinois State Industrial Commission, where he was employed for four years; and

WHEREAS, after the passing of his father in 1953, Mr. Washington succeeded him as precinct captain of the Third Ward. In 1965, he campaigned for office in the Illinois House of Representatives. He was successful in his bid, and served until 1976, when he was elected to the Illinois State Senate. Mr. Washington served there until 1980; and

WHEREAS, while working in the Illinois General Assembly, Mr. Washington established a reputation of being willing to step outside of the established political agenda. In doing so, he supported such causes as the Equal Rights Amendment, the establishment of a state holiday to honor Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and a fair housing code; and

WHEREAS, in November of 1980, Mr. Washington was elected as a Representative in the 97th United States Congress. In what was considered a landslide election, he was sworn in on January 3, 1981. During his term in Congress (1981-1983), Mr. Washington served on the following committees: Education and Labor; Judiciary; and Government Operations; and



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WHEREAS, while in Congress, Mr. Washington was known for his passion in advocating for revisions to the 1965 Voting Rights Act and an Equal Rights Amendment. He was an avid proponent of affirmative action and equity for Black people; and

WHEREAS, in February of 1983, encouraged by numerous Black leaders, Mr. Washington decided to try his hand again at running for the office of Mayor of the City of Chicago (his first run was in 1977 when he unsuccessfully ran in a special election to replace Richard J. Daley, who tragically died while in office). Against stiff and favored competition, and despite a financial disadvantage, Mr. Washington won the democratic nomination; and

WHEREAS, on April 12, 1983, Mr. Washington was elected as the first Black Mayor of the City of Chicago. He was sworn in on April 29th and proudly claimed his office; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Washington's first term in office was marred by numerous contentious battles. However, refusing to accept defeat, he again was victorious in his run for office and was elected to his second term as Mayor of the City of Chicago on April 7, 1987; and

WHEREAS, on November 25, 1987, Mr. Washington suffered a heart attack in his office, to which he succumbed. He was 65 years old; and

WHEREAS, Harold Washington is celebrated as a leader, a trailblazer, and an activist. He is remembered for his humor and his kindness. He was a well-loved political leader, not only in Chicago, but around the world. Mr. Washington is credited with not just advocating for change but putting in the work necessary to bring about that change. Through his leadership and his successful ascension to the office of mayor, he demonstrated the depth of what is possible; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the Board of Commissioners of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, on behalf of ourselves and our staff, do hereby recognize the 100th birthday of Harold Washington; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution be spread upon the permanent Record of Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.



DATED THIS 21ST DAY *of* APRIL, 2022.

BOARD *of* COMMISSIONERS

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