

BY ALDS. COGGS, HAMILTON, BOHL, STAMPER, BORKOWSKI, WITKOWSKI, PÉREZ, LEWIS, RAINEY, JOHNSON

Resolution expressing condolences to the family and friends of Velvlea “Vel” Phillips who passed from this life on April 17, 2018.

WHEREAS,

VELVALEA “VEL” PHILLIPS

passed from this life on April 17, 2018, and services were held for family and friends on May 5, 2018 at St. Mark AME Church, 1616 W. Atkinson Ave.; and

WHEREAS, *Vel Phillips was born in Milwaukee on February 18, 1924, and she attended North Division High School, where she developed her oratorical skills on the forensics team, earning her a scholarship to assist paying for her education at Howard University, and she eventually returned to Wisconsin to attend the University of Wisconsin Law School, soon to become the first African-American woman to graduate from the school; and*

WHEREAS, *Vel Phillips was elected to the Milwaukee Common Council in 1956, the first African-American and the first woman to do so, and served on the Common Council until 1971, remaining a strong advocate for fair housing, civil rights, and gender equality, evident by her reintroduction of the Fair Housing Ordinance every 90 days for 7 years until her fellow aldermen passed the bill in 1968; and*

WHEREAS, *Vel Phillips went on to continue breaking down barriers as an appointed judge in the Milwaukee County Children’s Court in 1971 as the first African-American judge in Wisconsin and the first female judge in Milwaukee, and she eventually left the position to run for office again in 1978, when she was elected to serve as Wisconsin’s first minority Secretary of State; and*

WHEREAS, *Vel Phillips and her rich legacy of advocacy and fearlessness, evident in her active leadership in the civil rights movement and organizations such as the NAACP and her friendships with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, and presidents Lyndon B. Johnson, John F. Kennedy, and Jimmy Carter, continues to inspire activists and citizens across the country to promote equity in all forms; and*

WHEREAS, *Vel Phillips established her foundation, the Vel Phillips Foundation, to advocate for justice for all minorities and create equal opportunity for everyone through social justice, education, equal housing opportunities, and the Common Council created the Vel R. Phillips Trailblazer Award to recognize Milwaukee residents who share in Vel Phillips’ inspiring legacy of social justice and civil accomplishment; now, therefore, be it*

RESOLVED, *That the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee herewith expresses its condolences to the family and friends of Velvlea “Vel” Phillips, recognizes her lasting impact on the community and mourns with deep sorrow the passing of the woman who played an integral role in the civil rights movement, and has positively impacted the City of Milwaukee for years to come; and, be it*

FURTHER RESOLVED, *That a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Velvlea “Vel” Phillips to commemorate her courageous work and life.*

Introduced by Common Council members Milele A. Coggs, Ashanti Hamilton, Jim Bohl, Russell W. Stamper, II, Mark A. Borkowski, Terry L. Witkowski, José G. Pérez, Chantia Lewis, Khalif J. Rainey, and Cavalier Johnson and approved by all members of the Milwaukee Common Council on May 8, 2018.