



Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF ALBERT PRITCHETT, JR.

WHEREAS, Albert (Al) Pritchett Jr., a devoted family man and accomplished pioneer in African-American governmental leadership in numerous governments in Cook County, has been taken from our midst; and

WHEREAS, Al Pritchett was born in Crawfordsville, Arkansas on September 18, 1932, the oldest of four children, to Albert Sr. and Rebecca Pritchett. In 1936 the family moved to Chicago, settling on 38th and Indiana Avenue. Albert began his education at Wendell Phillips Elementary School and continued at Wendell Phillips High School where he excelled in the classroom and in sports, lettering in track and field and football; and

WHEREAS, after graduating High School in 1950, Al matriculated at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he continued to exude academic excellence and athletic prowess, graduating in June of 1955. Al Pritchett was drafted into the US Navy later that year and, while home on leave, he married the love of his life, Gloria Fay Hunter, on June 1, 1957. Their union would last 64 years and would see the birth of their daughters Jeanette Marie and Valerie Ann; and

WHEREAS, Al possessed a deep love and affection for family, which was displayed endlessly when imparting wisdom and guidance to his grandchildren: Aja Monique Brown, Rebeka Leigh Thomas, Komae Julian Brown, Vivian Marie Thomas, Kaela Simone Brown, and Elan Michele Brown, (In-Law) Jonathan A. Thomas, Jillian A. Thomas & Jason A. Thomas, and his great-grandchildren: Kamyla Marie-Julianne Brown, Braylen Perez Daniels, Kamora Leanne Brown, Bryson Perez Daniels, and Komae Julian Brown Jr., and

WHEREAS, Al Pritchett would begin a more than 40-year career of public service in 1958 with the Chicago Park District; and

WHEREAS, beginning in 1966 under Mayor Richard J. Daley, Albert Pritchett helped to rebuild and revitalize many neighborhoods throughout the City of Chicago during his work as Deputy Director for the Near South Area with the Chicago Committee on Urban Opportunity (CCUO). In 1972, Al Pritchett began a positive working relationship between the City of Chicago and local social service agencies when he became the Director of Delegate Agency Services for the City of Chicago's Model Cities Program -- a forerunner of the current City of Chicago Department of Human Services; and

WHEREAS, in 1975, Al Pritchett became the Acting Director of the newly-merged Model Cities/CCUO office, where he was responsible for the overall direction and administration of Chicago's comprehensive human service agency which had relationships with 300 delegate agencies and over 1000 program components; and

WHEREAS, in 1977, Chicago Mayor Michael Bilandic appointed Al Pritchett to the position of Special Assistant to the Mayor, where he coordinated the human service activities of several departments on behalf of the Mayor; and in 1979, he was appointed to the position of Assistant Director of the City of Chicago Department of Public Safety, where he helped City departments prepare swift and effective responses to emergencies and disasters; and

WHEREAS, in 1982, Al Pritchett would begin his service to the County of Cook in the office of Cook County Assessor

Thomas C. Hynes as Chief Administrative Officer for the Assessor's Office, providing leadership to the employees of the office and assistance to taxpayers with concerns regarding their properties; and

WHEREAS, in 1991, Cook County Board President Richard J. Phelan would appoint Al Pritchett as Cook County Chief Administrative Officer of Cook County, the second person to hold that position, and the first African American to be appointed to this position in the County's history; and

WHEREAS, Albert Pritchett's tenure as Chief Administrative Officer would continue through the administration of President John H. Stroger, Jr., where he would play a key role in shaping policy on economic development, human service programs and veterans programs. He led efforts to bring 911 emergency telephone services to all of Cook County; coordinated Cook County's hosting of the 1993 National Association of Counties annual convention; strengthened the Chicago Chapter of the National Forum for Black Public Administrators; and advanced Cook County's adaptation of technology and consolidation of the downtown offices of Cook County Government. Al Pritchett's legacy as Chief Administrative Officer was one of fairness, loyalty, attention to detail, efficiency, a commitment to working together, and a dedication to effective government working on behalf of all residents of Cook County; and

WHEREAS, in 1998, Mr. Pritchett retired from Cook County Government until Cook County Board President John Stroger called upon Mr. Pritchett again in 2003 to serve as Interim Superintendent of the Forest Preserves. In 2006 Cook County Board President Bobbie L. Steele tapped Mr. Pritchett to serve as her Chief of Staff. Later, Mr. Pritchett accepted appointments to a number of boards and commissions that supported everything from the Forest Preserves to the Census count including serving as Chair of the Board of Directors, for the Forest Preserves Foundation; and

WHEREAS, in retirement, Al Pritchett could enjoy time with the loves of his life-his family and the world of sports. There was time to travel to various parts of the world, to spend time with grandchildren and great grandchildren and time to watch and discuss sports. He regularly attended world championship track and field meets with his wife Gloria and their friends; no distance was too far to travel to see a good meet. He was also an avid supporter of Chicago's sports teams, holding season tickets at one time or another to the Bears, Bulls and White Sox; and

WHEREAS, at every level of government, from children and young people whom he mentored at the Park District to families and whole neighborhoods who sought the help of the Model Cities/CCUO Community Centers, to the staff persons he hired, Mr. Pritchett taught leadership skills and emphasized the importance of loyalty, honesty and dedication to getting the job done. Mr. Pritchett's professional legacy is seen in the future success of those individuals who worked for him. Two of his personal staff as Chief Administrative Officer would go on to also become Chief Administrative Officer and another would become Secretary to the Cook County Board; and

WHEREAS, those who worked for him did so not in fear of him, but in fear of disappointing him; they would live by the Elbert Hubbard quote which was on the walls of every office he ever occupied:

“If you work for a man, in Heaven’s name work for him! If he pays you wages that supply your bread and butter, work for him, stand by him, and stand by the institution he represents. If put to a pinch, an ounce of loyalty is worth a pound of cleverness. If you must vilify, condemn and eternally disparage - Resign your position”

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Toni Preckwinkle, President, and the Forest Preserves of Cook County Board of Commissioners honor the life of love and work led by Albert Pritchett, Jr; and that the Board thanks Gloria Fay Pritchett and her entire family for sharing the time of their husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather with Cook County Government-a place he made better for all of us.