



Legislation Text

File #: 51019, **Version:** 1

Fiscal Note

No appropriation required.

Title

Honoring and remembering Velvlea "Vel" Phillips for her significant contributions to the African-American community, women and the State of Wisconsin.

Body

WHEREAS, Civil Rights pioneer Velvlea "Vel" Phillips passed away on April 17, 2018 at the age of 94; and,

WHEREAS, Vel Phillips was born on February 18, 1924 to Thelma and Russell Rodgers, Milwaukee restaurant owners; and

WHEREAS, she graduated from Howard University in 1946 and was the first African-American woman to graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School in 1951, the first of many barriers that Phillips broke down during her life; and,

WHEREAS, Vel Phillips became the Milwaukee's first African-American and first female alderman in 1956 winning her election in a majority white neighborhood, where she concealed her race and gender by not including a photo on her campaign literature; and,

WHEREAS, she was an active member in both the League of Women Voters as well as the NAACP, where she worked closely with Father James Groppi, the advisor for the NAACP Youth Council, to bring national attention to Milwaukee's civil rights movement; and,

WHEREAS, in 1967, she and other activists organized a 200-day demonstration to fight for fair housing and two weeks after King's assassination in 1968, Phillips saw Milwaukee's open housing bill pass, which helped lead to equal housing; and,

WHEREAS, in 1971 she resigned from her seat on the Milwaukee Common Council and was appointed to the Milwaukee County judiciary becoming the first woman judge in Milwaukee and the first African American judge in Wisconsin; and,

WHEREAS, she made national history as the first woman and first African-American elected as the Secretary of State in Wisconsin in 1978; and,

WHEREAS, Vel Phillips left her mark on Wisconsin and our nation's history by shaping policies to remove barriers and create equality for African-Americans and women,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Common Council of the City of Madison express their condolences to the family of Velvlea "Vel" Phillips and their gratitude for Vel's significant contributions to the African-American community, women and the State of Wisconsin.