

Resolution Number 121
Margaret Bush Wilson

WHEREAS, one of St. Louis' finest citizens Margaret Bush Wilson, a civil rights pioneer, leader, attorney, and business executive, passed on August 11, 2009; and

WHEREAS, she was born January 30, 1919, the second of three children. She received an early education on civil rights and public service as her mother, Margaret Casey Bush, was on the executive committee of the local NAACP. Her father, James T. Bush, was a real estate agent and financially backed civil rights causes; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Wilson attended Sumner High School and graduated in 1935. After high school, she attended Talladega College and earned a degree in economics with a minor in mathematics. While attending Talladega, Mrs. Wilson was awarded the Julia Prescott Fellowship to study abroad in India, where she met Mahatma Gandhi and Nobel Prize winning poet, Rabindranath Tagore. After graduation, she attended Lincoln University Law School and earned her law degree in 1943 and became, at that time, only the second African American female to practice law in Missouri; and

WHEREAS, after working a few years for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Electrification Administration, Mrs. Wilson married a law school classmate, Robert Wilson Jr. and they set up a law practice in St. Louis. She joined the legal team on the historic *Shelley v. Kraemer* case, which challenged housing covenants that excluded African Americans and Jewish people from certain neighborhoods in St. Louis and other cities. The case, which came out of her father's real estate dealings, went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in 1948 that the covenants were unenforceable; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Wilson presided over the St. Louis Chapter of the NAACP during the historic Jefferson Bank demonstrations. In early 1960, she organized the first statewide NAACP conference in Missouri which became the Missouri State Conference of NAACP Branches, of which she also served as President. After presiding over the City and State branches of the NAACP, Mrs. Wilson became the first African American woman to head the national NAACP. She held the position of national chair for nine consecutive terms. When asked by male board members "What shall we call you? Chairperson? Chairlady?" she responded "As long as you recognize that I'm the Chairman of the Board, I don't care what you call me"; and

WHEREAS, she was a life member of the Mound City Bar Association (MCBA) and a life member of the National Bar Association (NBA). She was a Charter Inductee into the NBA's Hall of Fame in 1986; a recipient of the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award in 1992 at the NBA's 67th Annual Meeting in St. Louis; and the recipient of numerous other recognitions during her life; and

WHEREAS, Margaret Bush Wilson's young life was touched by social and civil rights advancements and in her adult life she spearheaded social and civil rights advancements. She was undoubtedly one of St. Louis' greatest citizens and she was always willing and able to assume roles of leadership and fight for the right reasons; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Wilson was preceded in death by both her parents, as well as her husband, and her older brother, James T. Bush Jr. Her sister, Ermine Byas, lives in Rochester, NY and her son, Robert Wilson, lives in Rio De Janeiro.

NOW THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED by the Board of Aldermen of the City of St. Louis that we pause in our deliberations to recognize Margaret Bush Wilson for her innumerable contributions to the United States, State of Missouri and City of St. Louis and thank her for being an inspiration for so many and we further direct the Clerk of this Board to include a copy of this Resolution in the minutes of these proceedings and to prepare a memorial copy for presentation at a time and place deemed appropriate by the Sponsor.

Introduced on August 21st, 2009 by:

Honorable Terry Kennedy, Alderman 18th Ward
Honorable Lewis E. Reed, President of the Board of Aldermen
Honorable Charles Quincy Troupe, Alderman 1st Ward
Honorable Dionne Flowers, Alderwoman 2nd Ward
Honorable Freeman Bosley, Sr., Alderman 3rd Ward
Honorable Samuel L. Moore, Alderman 4th Ward
Honorable April Ford Griffin, Alderwoman 5th Ward
Honorable Kacie Starr Triplett, Alderwoman 6th Ward

Honorable Marlene E. Davis, Alderwoman 19th Ward
Honorable Craig Schmid, Alderman 20th Ward
Honorable Antonio D. French, Alderman 21st Ward
Honorable Jeffrey L. Boyd, Alderman 22nd Ward
Honorable Frank Williamson, Alderman 26th Ward
Honorable Gregory J. Carter, Alderman 27th Ward

Adopted August 21st, 2009 as attested by:

David W. Sweeney
Clerk, Board of Aldermen

Lewis E. Reed
President, Board of Aldermen