

A RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE OF REVEREND JESSE LOUIS JACKSON, SR.

WHEREAS, It is with great sadness that the members of this Chamber have been informed of the passing of Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. on Tuesday, February 17, 2026; and

WHEREAS, As one of America's foremost civil rights, religious, and political leaders, Reverend Jackson was an institution from his home base in Chicago and his wisdom, leadership, and social conscience will be greatly missed by all; and

WHEREAS, Jesse Jackson was born Jesse Louis Burns on October 8, 1941 in Greenville, South Carolina to Helen Burns and Noah Louis Robinson. Helen later married Charles Jackson in 1943 and 14 years later Charles formally adopted Jesse; and

WHEREAS, He graduated from public schools in Greenville before enrolling in the University of Illinois on a football scholarship. He later transferred to North Carolina A&T State University where he graduated in 1964. He began his theological studies at Chicago Theological Seminary, but deferred his studies when he began working full-time in the Civil Rights Movement with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He was ordained on June 30, 1968 by Reverend Clay Evans from Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago's 3rd Ward, and later earned his Master of Divinity degree from Chicago Theological Seminary in 2000; and

WHEREAS, Drawing inspiration from the Greensboro sit-ins in 1960, which featured four students from the nearby North Carolina A&T State University where he was attending, Mr. Jackson led a march in June 1963 of hundreds of students through the City's downtown prompting his arrest the next day; and

WHEREAS, He continued his participation in the Civil Rights movement while attending Chicago Theological Seminary, where in March 1965, he climbed atop a table in the cafeteria and challenged other students to travel to Selma, Alabama to join the ongoing protests. About 20 students and a third of the school's faculty went to join the protests, and that is where his association with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. began; and

WHEREAS, Six months later, at age 24, Mr. Jackson became the youngest staff member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and was chosen to head the Chicago chapter of the S.C.L.C's Operation Breadbasket. By 1967 his national reputation grew, and he quit school to join the Civil Rights movement full time; and

WHEREAS, As part of Dr. King's inner circle, Reverend Jackson was in Memphis, Tennessee in April 1968 when Dr. King was assassinated. In December 1971, Rev. Jackson founded Operation PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity) in Chicago, IL with the goal of economic empowerment and expanding opportunities for the disadvantaged and people of color; and

WHEREAS, In 1984 Rev. Jackson founded the National Rainbow Coalition, a social justice organization based in Washington, DC, and that same year launched his campaign as the second Black candidate from a major party to run for president. With his tireless work effort and gifted oratory skill, Rev. Jackson won 3.2 million votes in Democratic primaries. His dramatic 50-minute speech at the Democratic convention that year cemented his place in American culture; and

WHEREAS, His 1988 campaign registered over two million new voters, won seven million votes, and helped boost hundreds of state and local elected officials into office. Additionally, he won historic victories, coming in first or second in 46 out of 54 primary contests; and

WHEREAS, In September of 1996, the Rainbow Coalition and Operation PUSH merged to form the Rainbow PUSH Coalition to continue the work of both organizations. Rev. Jackson's longstanding advocacy for progressive causes and the rights of the underserved were strengthened and focused through this merger and carry on to this day; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson work extended internationally, helping to secure the release of captured Navy Lieutenant Robert Goodman from Syria in 1984, and the release of 48 Cuban and Cuban-American prisoners in Cuba. In 1999 Rev. Jackson negotiated the release of U.S. soldiers held hostage in Kosovo, and in 2000 helped negotiate the release of four journalists working on a documentary in Liberia; and

WHEREAS, Among his many awards, President Bill Clinton made him a special envoy to Africa and, in 2000, awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor; and

WHEREAS Despite international acclaim, Rev. Jackson never forgot his adopted hometown of Chicago. For decades, his organizations have provided scholarships to local students who otherwise may not have been able to afford a college education. He has lifted the profile of economic developments in underserved communities, offered spiritual guidance to residents of all faiths, contributed to Chicago journalism and media serving as a unifying voice for Black Chicagoans, provided wise counsel and deep historical education for countless City officials - including 3rd Ward Alderman Pat Dowell, taught political organizing to future leaders like First Lady Michelle Obama, and through his two presidential campaigns, helped to lay the foundation for President Barack Obama's successful campaigns; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Jackson is survived by his wife, Jacqueline Lavinia Brown and his six children: Santita Jackson, Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr., Congressman Jonathan Luther Jackson, Yusef DuBois Jackson, Esq., Jacqueline Lavinia Jackson, Jr., and Ashley Jackson; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and the Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago gathered here in assembly this 18th Day of February, 2026 A.D., do hereby recognize the immense contributions of Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. to our City and Country, and extend our condolences to the family and friends of Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr.; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be prepared and presented to the family of Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr.



Pat Dowell
Alderman, 3rd Ward