



Legislation Text

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To honor, recognize and celebrate the life of civil rights champion and community advocate Mr. Earl Franklin “Wimpy” Potts and to extend our sincerest condolences to his family and friends on the occasion of his passing, Wednesday, April 7, 2021.

WHEREAS, the members of Columbus City Council extend this resolution of expression to honor the life and service of civil rights champion Mr. Earl Potts who passed away on Wednesday, April 7, 2021; and

WHEREAS, Earl Franklin Potts, best known as “Wimpy” was born in Columbus, Ohio on March 5, 1933 - after graduating from West High School, he attended the Ohio State University before joining the United States Army where he became a Corporal and received the prestigious Purple Heart award; and

WHEREAS, Earl married Joan A. Weaver on October 24, 1954 and the two celebrated 66 years of life together - Earl’s 35 years of government service included work with: The Internal Revenue Service, the United States Postal Service with twenty years as a mail carrier on the Hilltop, and service with the Defense Construction Supply Center - Earl established the Hilltop Wildcats amateur baseball team in the late 60’s and that group of men stayed in close contact for more than 50 years; and

WHEREAS, Earl was a dedicated community leader and Civil Rights Activist. Earl was responsible for organizing most civil rights activities in Columbus, including the famed March on Washington with Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1963 - He was instrumental in getting the Columbus City Schools to incorporate the Black History curriculum, and taught it at Ohio State University and Westmoor Middle School in the early 70’s after supporting daughters Deborah and Diane and their schoolmates in peaceful protests at West High and Westmoor Middle School - He was also a loyal “Hilltopper” and youth advocate who lived on the Westside his entire life. Earl founded the Hilltop Civic Council in 1970 and sponsored summer jobs for youth and held dances and other activities to help ease racial tensions when African-American students made their voices heard and their presence recognized during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1970’s; and

WHEREAS, Earl also founded The Crib- a dance and party club for youth on the Hilltop to help keep youth active and out of trouble - He was a working member and/or supporter of many Hilltop organizations, including the Hilltop Reunion Committee, Hilltop Bean Dinner Committee, West High School Reunion Committee, the Hilltop Historical Society, The Highland West Neighbors Association and Hilltop Commission - in 1992, Wimpy helped organize the Hilltop Reunion Committee and worked with the group’s first community gathering in 1993 at Rhodes Park. Since then, the committee has donated more than forty scholarships to graduating students from high schools on the West Side; and

WHEREAS, Earl successfully lobbied to have the official Olympic Relay Torch for the 1996 games in Atlanta to pass along Oakley Avenue on the Hilltop, past the home where his long-time friend, Olympic star Jesse Owens once lived right down the street from Earl’s own home - he was often asked to speak at various events, and has been on several television shows and books, including one highlighting the Tuskegee Airmen - he was an avid reader and read hundreds of books; and

WHEREAS, Earl founded a Black History Library on the Hilltop and donated hundreds of books so that others could learn about the rich history of African Americans - in 1968, Earl helped daughter Diane convince Westmoor Middle

School to host the school's first ever girls basketball team who won the championship that year with Diane leading the team in baskets scored while wearing her dad's high school number on her jersey; and

WHEREAS, Earl also coordinated the Columbus West portion of Hands Across America- a public fundraising event on Sunday, May 25, 1986, in which approximately 5 to 6.5 million people held hands for fifteen minutes in an attempt to form a continuous human chain across the contiguous United States - the event raised about \$15 million - the proceeds were donated to local charities to fight hunger and homelessness and help those in poverty; and

WHEREAS, Earl served as an usher at Sigsbee Avenue Church of God for several years until his death; and

WHEREAS, One of Earl's most renowned contributions to the community is his annual Memorial Day Breakfast where he served over one hundred people his homemade waffles and maple syrup, scrambled eggs and his infamous fried potatoes and onions. People will remember him for this for many years to come. We hope his grandsons will pick up the torch to continue this event; and

WHEREAS, Earl's favorite song was Nat King Cole's "They Tried to Tell Us We're Too Young" He was a loving husband of high school sweetheart Joan (for over 67 years) and matriarch of a family of 3 Children, 9 Grandchildren, 27 Great grandchildren and 1 Great-great granddaughter, now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

That this Council does hereby honor, recognize and celebrate the life of civil rights champion and community advocate Mr. Earl "Wimpy" Potts and extend our sincerest condolences to his family and friends on the occasion of his passing, Wednesday, April 7, 2021.