

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 150033)

RESOLUTION

Honoring and celebrating Philadelphia's Living Legends: Geneva Black, Senator Shirley M. Kitchen, Cody Anderson, Vernon Odom, Fire Commissioner Lloyd Ayers, Ret., Vai Sikahema and Bobby Williams in the areas of government, public safety, social justice, civil rights, labor relations, journalism, community activism and business leadership in Philadelphia; and also recognizing Obra Kernodle IV as an Up and Coming Living Legend, all as part of the commemoration of Black History Month.

WHEREAS, Geneva A. Black has dedicated her life and service for more than 45 years to providing quality compassionate in-home and centered-based care for elderly and vulnerable residents in West Philadelphia. In 1970, Ms. Black joined the Haddington Leadership Organization as a housing coordinator and two years later became its Executive Director. Since that time, the organization was renamed Haddington Multi-Services for Older Adults, Inc. and more than quadrupled its staff, services and positive impact in the community; and

WHEREAS, The Honorable Shirley M. Kitchen has a vast history of political service and community advocacy dating back to 1970 when she was a poll worker, to her days as a constituent service representative at Philadelphia City Hall, to her leadership as a State Representative and current role on the Pennsylvania Senate since 1997. Senator Kitchen's leadership has been celebrated with numerous awards including the Philadelphia Tribune's Most Influential African American Leader, the Dawn Staley Foundation Government Service Award, the Warren E. Smith Corporate Women of Year Award and the Distinguished Service Community Impact Award from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, among many others; and

WHEREAS, Cody Anderson launched a distinguished career in radio as vice president and general manager of WDAS radio in Philadelphia. He continued on to purchase and operate WHAT radio and opened a family-operated public relations firm while also working with Dr. and Mrs. Walter Lomax to make 900 AM WURD radio accessible to the Philadelphia African American community. Mr. Anderson worked tirelessly with

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area prisons, speaking with inmates and giving them a chance to tell their stories, exemplary of his belief that everybody deserves to be heard. Mr. Anderson is also committed to service beyond the borders of Philadelphia with philanthropic contributions to Hurricane Katrina victims and vulnerable groups in Senegal, Africa where he was recognized as an honorary Chief; and

WHEREAS, Vernon Odom, anchor with Action News team, comes from a strong family history of journalists. His maternal grandfather, B.T. Harvey, Sr. was the second African-American to publish a daily newspaper. Vernon Odom has been with WPVI-TV/6abc in Philadelphia for more than 35 years. His reportorial experience dates back to the Martin Luther King assassination when he was a radio reporter in Atlanta. He has covered various phases of the civil right movement in the Deep South and early political campaigns for national leaders such as former President Jimmy Carter, Andrew Young, Julian Bond and Maynard Jackson. In November 2004, Mr. Odom was inducted into the Broadcast Pioneers Hall of Fame; and ⁴

WHEREAS, Lloyd Ayers began his career with the Philadelphia Fire Department in 1974 and devoted 31 years to public service with the Philadelphia Fire Department, serving in every rank in the Department from Lieutenant to Deputy Commissioner. Then, Lloyd Ayers was sworn in as Philadelphia's Fire Commissioner on Wednesday, December 1st, 2004. As Fire Commissioner, he managed the 2,400-member uniformed force and all the operations of the Philadelphia Fire Department, which comprise the 5th largest fire department in the United States. Commissioner Ayers retired from the Philadelphia Fire Department on June 13, 2014 ending a four decades of remarkable service; and

WHEREAS, Vai Sikahema celebrated a lengthy professional football career in the NFL from 1986 to 1993 when he retired from professional football and the Philadelphia Eagles. Vai then launched his career as sports announcer in 1994 with then-CBS owned and operated television station WCAU in Philadelphia working as a spokesperson for weekend sporting events. After the station was sold to NBC, Vai moved to weekday sports announcing and currently serves as the station's sports director; and

WHEREAS, Bobby J. Williams is a tireless community advocate who has dedicated the past 62 years of his life to struggling residents in the Nicetown-Tioga neighborhood. Williams began his community activism as a coordinator in the NAACP — first under Philadelphia chapter president A. Leon Higginbotham, then throughout the tenure of Cecil B. Moore. Williams also founded several community organizations and became a member of countless more, all while working his way up the ladder at a men's suits warehouse and running his own dry-cleaning service. Today, Williams can be found still giving back to the community in a variety of roles with nonprofit organizations throughout Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Obra S. Kernodle, IV was born and raised in Philadelphia. A graduate of Roman Catholic High School, he obtained his Bachelor of Arts in Education from Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University in 2002. Before joining the Wolf for Governor

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Campaign, Obra worked in Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter's Administration as deputy of legislative affairs, helping to coordinate the City's Actual Value Initiative (AVI). In 2012, Obra was part of President Obama's reelection effort as the Pennsylvania southeast political director. Obra previously served as the political director for both Mayor Nutter's 2011 reelection bid and District Attorney Seth Williams' race in 2009. Obra currently holds the position of Deputy Chief of Staff for Governor Tom Wolf. Before serving in his current position, Obra played a key role on the Wolf campaign as senior adviser for Mr. Wolf's transition team and also as deputy campaign manager and political director. Obra's appointment as Deputy Chief of Staff for the Governor makes one of the youngest African Americans to hold such as position in the governor's cabinet; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby honors and celebrates Philadelphia's Living Legends: Geneva Black, Senator Shirley M. Kitchen, Cody Anderson, Vernon Odom, Fire Commissioner Lloyd Ayers, Ret., Vai Sikahema and Bobby Williams in the areas of government, public safety, social justice, civil rights, labor relations, journalism, community activism and business leadership in Philadelphia; and also recognizing Obra Kenodle IV as an Up and Coming Living Legend, all as part of the commemoration of Black History Month.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Philadelphia's Living Legends as evidence of the sincere admiration of this legislative body.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the twenty-second of January, 2015.

Darrell L. Clarke
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Michael A. Decker
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmembers Jones, Kenney, Reynolds Brown and Goode

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Jones, Kenney, Reynolds Brown and Goode
Bass, Blackwell, O'Brien, Greenlee, Tasco, Neilson, Squilla,
Oh, Henon and O'Neill