

# City of Philadelphia



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

(Resolution No. 250256)

## RESOLUTION

Honoring the life and legacy of the Honorable Phyllis W. Beck, retired judge of the Superior Court, who was a treasured member of the Philadelphia legal community, philanthropist, trailblazer, and mentor.

WHEREAS, Phyllis W. Beck was born on October 7, 1927 in Brooklyn, New York, the daughter of Yiddish-speaking Polish immigrants, and raised in the Bronx; and

WHEREAS, Judge Beck graduated from Hunter College High School in 1945, and attended Pembroke College in Brown University, graduating in 1949; and

WHEREAS, In 1962, after a year of graduate study in psychology at Bryn Mawr College, Judge Beck attended Temple Law School as a part-time evening student. She excelled in her studies and worked at an accelerated pace, leading her to finish law school in half the time of most of her cohort; and

WHEREAS, After graduating first in her class from Temple Law School, Judge Beck practiced law at two firms for seven years. A feminist and trailblazer in her field, she encountered misogyny and other obstacles as a young lawyer in a male-dominated field. She described herself and fellow women who became lawyers in the 1950s and 1960s as a “brave band of sisters who marched into a profession that was not ready for us;” and

WHEREAS, Judge Beck taught at Temple Law School from 1972 to 1976 and served as Vice Dean at the University of Pennsylvania’s Carey Law School from 1976 to 1981. A lifelong mentor, she was deeply committed to investing in the future of the practice of law and enriching the education of the next generation of great attorneys; and

WHEREAS, Judge Beck became the first woman to serve on the Pennsylvania Superior Court after being appointed in 1981 by then-Governor Dick Thornburgh. Two years later, Beck was elected statewide to serve a full 10-year term in 1983 and was retained in 1993; and

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*RESOLUTION NO. 250256 continued*

WHEREAS, In 1987, Judge Beck was appointed by Governor Bob Casey to be the Chair of the Governor's Judicial Reform Commission, which consisted of 23 members who recommended ways to create major structural reform to Pennsylvania's judicial system; and

WHEREAS, In 1999, Judge Beck created the Beck Chair in Law at Temple Law School with the support of the Independence Foundation, seeking to bring in notable scholars and leaders in a related field or in law to the Temple Law faculty as visiting professors. The purpose of the Beck Chair appointees is to engage with the school community, teach, and deliver the Beck lecture; and

WHEREAS, Judge Beck received numerous awards throughout her law career including the Pennsylvania Bar Association Alpern Award, the Philadelphia Bar Association Brennan Distinguished Jurist Award, the Temple Law Alumni Association Distinguished Graduate Award, the Philadelphia Bar Association's Women in the Profession Committee Justice Sandra Day O'Connor Award, was named a Distinguished Daughter of Pennsylvania by Governor Tom Ridge in 2000, and awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Legal Intelligencer; and  
WHEREAS, In 2006, Judge Beck retired from the bench, but continued her career of service. She served as chair of the Independence Foundation, general counsel for the Barnes Foundation, mediator for Superior Court and in asbestos cases for the First Judicial District, and advisory board chair of Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts, an Appellate Master for the Chester Housing Authority, and vice-chair of the Ethics Board of the City of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, She and her daughter, Judge Alice Beck Dubow, became the first mother and daughter to serve as judges in Pennsylvania when Dubow was elected in 2007; and

WHEREAS, Phyllis W. Beck passed away on Monday, March 3, 2025 at the age of 97, leaving behind her legacy as a mentor, trailblazer, distinguished jurist, teacher, philanthropist, feminist, supporter of legal education; and

WHEREAS, Throughout her life and career, Judge Beck was an exceptional leader who had a transformative impact on the legal field in Philadelphia. She devoted her career to the public interest and advocated judicial reform to create a more equitable justice system and judicial independence; and

WHEREAS, She was a staunch supporter of building up resources to improve and enhance legal education, providing wise counsel and mentorship to the many law students with whom she interacted in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, In her career outside the courtroom, Judge Beck championed health-care reform, civic participation, and support for the arts and the humanities; and

WHEREAS, A loving mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, Judge Beck leaves behind the legacy of many generations; and

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*RESOLUTION NO. 250256 continued*

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby honors the life and legacy of Honorable Phyllis W. Beck, retired judge of the Superior Court, who was a treasured member of the Philadelphia legal community, a philanthropist, trailblazer, and mentor.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Honorable Phyllis W. Beck, as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.

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*RESOLUTION NO. 250256 continued*

CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the twentieth day of March, 2025.

Kenyatta Johnson  
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Elizabeth McCollum  
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Landau

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Landau, Phillips, Gilmore Richardson,  
Brooks, Harrity, O'Rourke, Driscoll and Ahmad