

Legislation Text

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Recognizing and honoring Judge Doris Smith-Ribner for her years of service to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as the first Black woman elected to a statewide judicial seat on the occasion of Women's History Month.

WHEREAS, Doris Smith-Ribner was born and raised in Cleveland before coming to Pennsylvania to further her education, earning a Bachelor's degree in economics and Juris Doctor degree from the University of Pittsburgh; and

WHEREAS, Smith-Ribner planned to return to Ohio after graduation, but remained in Pennsylvania at the urging of a colleague and mentor, K. Leroy Irvis; and

WHEREAS, The two were colleagues at a law firm in Pittsburgh while Smith-Ribner was still in school; Irvis would later become the first Black Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, Smith-Ribner established a successful career in private practice in Allegheny County and served as the solicitor for the Allegheny County Controller; and

WHEREAS, Her legal prowess led Governor Dick Thornburgh to nominate her to a vacancy on the Common Pleas Court in Allegheny County; and

WHEREAS, After the appointment expired, Smith-Ribner ran for a full ten-year term on the bench; and

WHEREAS, Though her first attempt was unsuccessful, Smith-Ribner persevered and secured a seat on the court two years later; and

WHEREAS, Smith-Ribner's historic victory marked the first time a Black woman was elected to a statewide judicial seat in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, Smith-Ribner was reelected to the bench in 1997 and 2007; she retired in 2009; and

WHEREAS, In addition to her service as judge, Smith-Ribner served in various capacities at the local, state, and federal level; and

WHEREAS, Smith-Ribner was instrumental in desegregation cases involving the Philadelphia School District from 1993 to 2009; and

WHEREAS, Smith-Ribner's work and findings secured full-day kindergarten for all eligible children attending public schools and ordered millions of dollars from Harrisburg to carry out recommendations from education experts; and

WHEREAS, Smith-Ribner served on the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission under two governors,

and, in 2014, was appointed to the White House Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for African Americans; and

WHEREAS, Smith-Ribner today serves on the Board of Visitors at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, and Board Of Trustees at Lincoln University; and

WHEREAS, Smith-Ribner's distinguished career as a legal trailblazer, and ongoing contributions to the public, is in inspiration to women and all future public servants; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby recognizes and honors Judge Doris Smith-Ribner for her years of service to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as the first Black woman elected to a statewide judicial seat on the occasion of Women's History Month.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy be presented to Judge Doris Smith-Ribner, further evidencing the sincere respect and admiration of this legislative body.