



# City of Philadelphia

City Council  
Chief Clerk's Office  
402 City Hall  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

## Legislation Text

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Honoring the life and legacy of Karen S. Coates, Esq.

WHEREAS, Karen S. Coates, Esq., was born in Philadelphia to Carmella Breen and the late Richard J. Smith; and

WHEREAS, Karen was a native of Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, where she was the Salutatorian of Bloomsburg High School in 1981; and

WHEREAS, Karen attended Bloomsburg University, where she was a member of Sigma Sigma Sigma Sorority, and graduated cum laude in 1985. She went on to graduate cum laude from Dickinson School of Law in 1988; and

WHEREAS, Following law school, Coates spent about 20 years in private practice in Harrisburg as a litigator before joining Pennsylvania House of Representatives staff as Counsel to the House Judiciary Committee in 2007; and

WHEREAS, Karen joined Allegheny County Representative Mike Turzai's staff when he became House Majority Leader in 2011 and stayed with him when he became Speaker of the House in 2015; and

WHEREAS, Karen made history when she became the first female Chief of Staff and Chief Counsel to the Pennsylvania Speaker of the House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, Karen was a leader in a generation of women that broke significant glass ceilings at the Pennsylvania State Capitol as top staffers; and

WHEREAS, While acknowledging that being the first female Chief of Staff and Chief Counsel to the House Speaker was a momentous accomplishment, Karen let her work speak for itself; and

WHEREAS, Karen was a principled and strategic attorney who used her intellect and savvy to help shape each and every policy that came out of Harrisburg in recent years; and

WHEREAS, Speaker Turzai released a statement saying, "An attorney by training, Karen was intelligent, quick, strategic, savvy, straightforward and principled. She was also kind and respectful to all, humble and fun with a warm laugh. She was a role model and mentor to many on the House staff, as well as others. She was a natural leader and wise counselor. She personally resolved many legislative issues, helping to find solutions to move legislation forward on many significant policy fronts. We are indebted to her for her service to our team, the House and the Commonwealth. We will sadly miss her friendship"; and

WHEREAS, Karen was a model working mother. In the words of Speaker Turzai, "She always put her children first while balancing the immense responsibilities of managing a large staff and broad array of legislation"; and

WHEREAS, Karen is survived by, in addition to her mother, her daughter, Caleigh Coates Romano of Phoenixville; her son, Bernard "Trey" Coates III of Glendale, AZ; her sister, Andrea Girton of Harrisburg; her brother, Richard Smith, II of Conshohocken; and her companion Robert Taylor; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby honors the life and legacy of Karen S. Coates, Esq.