



City of Philadelphia

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

Legislation Text

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Honoring and congratulating Ms. Opal Lee for her tireless efforts to have Juneteenth recognized as a national holiday.

WHEREAS, Ms. Opal Lee was born on October 7, 1926, in Marshall, Texas, but later moved to Fort Worth, Texas at 10 years old; and

WHEREAS, On June 19, 1939, at the age of 12, her childhood home in Fort Worth was raided and burned down by a white mob, a moment which served as the catalyst for her lifelong dedication to activism; and

WHEREAS, After graduating from high school, Ms. Lee started a family and went on to attend Wiley College to earn her Bachelor's of Arts degree in 1953; and

WHEREAS, She spent her years in college learning to become a mentor, educator, and leader in the classroom and post-graduation as a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lee went on to teach elementary students for 15 years before she pushed herself to earn a Master's degree in Counseling and Guidance from North Texas State University. She went on to serve as a Home/School Counselor until her retirement in 1977; and

WHEREAS, Retiring gave Ms. Lee the time and opportunity to become even more involved in the community, volunteering for Habitat for Humanity, participating in her local church, and helping to organize and celebrate Juneteenth every year in Fort Worth for more than 40 years as well as joining the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation and pushing for national recognition for over 20 years; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lee helped found the Tarrant County Black Historical and Genealogical Society with civil rights activist Lenora Rolla; and

WHEREAS, In 2016, Ms. Lee, at 89 years old, launched "Opal's Walk 2 D.C." to bring attention to the importance of commemorating Juneteenth and our ancestor's fight for freedom and equality; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lee left Fort Worth in September 2016 walking 2.5 miles where she was invited all across America to represent the 2.5 years it took for enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation to reach Texas, arriving in Washington, D.C. in January 2017; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lee's dedication to preserving and remembering the history of injustice and struggle for equality paid off on June 17, 2021 when President Biden signed a law making Juneteenth a federal holiday; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That Council does hereby honor and congratulate Ms. Opal Lee for her tireless efforts to have Juneteenth recognized as a national holiday.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this Resolution be presented to Ms. Opal Lee, further evidencing the sincere respect of this legislative body.