



City of Philadelphia

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

Legislation Text

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Honoring and celebrating the life and legacy of service of the Honorable James R. Roebuck, Jr.

WHEREAS, Former Pennsylvania State representative and assistant history professor at Drexel University, Rep. Jim Roebuck, as he was known to friend, passed away on May 15, 2024, at the age of 79; and

WHEREAS, Rep. Roebuck served as the State Representative from the 188th District in West Philadelphia for 35 years; and

WHEREAS, He also worked as a history and politics lecturer and assistant professor at Drexel from 1970 to 1984, becoming a noted authority on schools and public education. He served as party chair of the House Education Committee for almost 20 years, helped secure state funding for kindergarten programs, the Community College of Philadelphia, and local access to high-speed internet; and

WHEREAS, His love for education was shared by his wife Cheryl, who was music teacher in Philadelphia. Together, they championed schools and public education in the City and across the State. They supported music instruction programs. He tutored reading students at Henry C. Lea Elementary; and

WHEREAS, Rep. Roebuck also endorsed charter school reform and opposed school vouchers for private school tuition; and

WHEREAS, He was known for his exceptional ability to form legislative coalitions and articulating nuances in policy proposals, remembered by his colleagues; and

WHEREAS, His other focuses included arts, job training, community building, and unjust incarceration, helping fund the Ronald McDonald House for families of medical patients and the Mercy Catholic Medical Center emergency department; and

WHEREAS, He was supporter of women's rights, LGBTQ rights, labor rights, gun law reform, and the protection of animals and environment. For nearly 20 years, he led the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, which created a scholarship in his name upon his retirement; and

WHEREAS, Born James Randolph Roebuck, Jr. February 12, 1945. Grew up in West Philadelphia and was drawn to history and politics after his 1963 graduation from Central High School; and

WHEREAS, As a faculty member at Drexel, he connected the school with local community groups and served on the board of the Garden Court Community Association and other organizations in West Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Feeling the call of politics, he left Drexel to work briefly as Goode's liaison with City Council. Previously, he was a Democratic Committeeman in 46th Ward and a member of the Democratic State Committee, ultimately running unsuccessfully for State Representative in 1976 and 1978; and

WHEREAS, Rep. Roebuck served as board member at the Community College of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Higher Education Assistance Agency, and Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission; and

WHEREAS, Rep. Roebuck earned his bachelor's degree in history from Virginia Union University and a masters' degree and doctorate in history at the University of Virginia (UVA). Active in politics from a young age, he was student council president at Virginia Union, the first Black president of UVA's student council and an outspoken proponent of racial and gender equality on the campus; and

WHEREAS, Before she passed away in 2016, he and his wife Cheryl enjoyed traveling by train to national parks across the Country and historical sites in Europe. His doctoral dissertation at Virginia was on U.S. diplomatic policies in East Asia, and he later toured China; and

WHEREAS, A diehard sports fan, Rep. Roebuck followed the Phillies and Eagles; and

WHEREAS, Roebuck will be remembered fondly by his former colleagues, friends and members of his community for his intellect, his passion for social justice, and commitment to public service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Honoring and celebrating the life and legacy of service of the Honorable James R. Roebuck, Jr.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Roebuck friends and family, in recognition of this occasion, further evidencing the sincere admiration and respect of this legislative body.