City of Philadelphia

City Council
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Title:	Honoring and recognizing the Honorable William Thaddeus Coleman, Jr. for his trailblazing efforts in the areas of civil rights, equality, and the law.				
Sponsors:	Councilmember Blackwell, Councilmember Tasco, Councilmember Greenlee, Councilmember O'Brien, Councilmember Kenney, Councilmember Johnson, Councilmember Goode, Councilmember Green, Councilmember Reynolds Brown, Councilmember Bass, Councilmember Oh, Councilmember Henon, Councilmember Quiñones Sánchez, Council President Clarke, Councilmember Jones				
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11/21/2013	0	CITY COUNCIL	Introduced and Ordered Placed on This Week's Final Passage Calendar	Pass	
11/21/2013	0	CITY COUNCIL	ADOPTED		

Honoring and recognizing the Honorable William Thaddeus Coleman, Jr. for his trailblazing efforts in the areas of civil rights, equality, and the law.

WHEREAS, Mr. William Thaddeus Colman, Jr. was born in Philadelphia on July 7, 1920 to William Thaddeus Coleman and Laura Beatrice Mason Coleman. Mr. Coleman was brought up in the Philadelphia public school system and during his time at Germantown High School was one of only seven African American students at the school; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Coleman went on to graduate *Summa Cum Laude* from the University of Pennsylvania in 1941 and attended Harvard Law School, where he became only the third African American to serve on the Harvard Law Review as an editor, and went on to graduate *Magna Cum Laude* and ranked first in his class at Harvard Law; and

WHEREAS, After law school Mr. Coleman served as clerk for Judge Herbert Goodrich in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit before becoming the first African American to clerk at the U.S. Supreme Court, working for Justice Felix Frankfurter; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Coleman, Jr. played an integral role in ending segregation as his legal expertise led him to argue before the United States Supreme Court over 90 times, leading to landmark decisions such as *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. The Board of Directors of City Trusts for the City of Philadelphia*, *McLaughlin v. Florida* and *Brown v. Board of Education*; and

WHEREAS, In the case of *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. The Board of Directors of City Trusts for the City of Philadelphia*, Mr. Coleman was part of the legal team that persuaded the U.S. Supreme Court that Girard College's discriminatory practice of only admitting white children was unconstitutional, ultimately removing

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racial restrictions at the school; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Coleman, Jr. played an essential role in overturning a Florida criminal statute which prohibited "an unmarried interracial couple from habitually living in and occupying the same room in the nighttime" which set the groundwork for full legalization of interracial marriage; and

WHEREAS, As a member of Thurgood Marshall's Legal Team at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Mr. Coleman was instrumental in the effort to desegregate schools by writing briefs and developing legal strategies that culminated in his co-authorship of the brief that led to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954; and

WHEREAS, On May 17, 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a unanimous decision stating that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" and that the idea of "separate but equal education was a violation of the Equal Protection of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Coleman resigned as partner in the Dilworth law firm in Philadelphia to serve in the Cabinet of the Nation's 38th President, Gerald T. Ford, as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Treasury from 1975 to 1977. After this appointment, Mr. Coleman joined the law firm of O'Melveny & Myers, LLP in Washington, D.C. where he is currently a senior partner and senior counselor and continues to provide legal counsel to Presidents, Cabinet Officials and other World Leaders; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Coleman has been conferred several accolades, including but not limited to, being nominated by the President of France to become an Officer of the National Order of the Legion of Honor (1979); the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award, by President William Clinton (1995); the Thurgood Marshall Lifetime Achievement Award by the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (1997); the Thaddeus Stevens Award by the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia (2000); the Fordham-Stein Prize from the Fordham University School of Law (2000); the "Legends of the Bar" award from the District of Columbia Bar Association (2006); and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Founder's Award (2007); and

WHEREAS, Mr. Coleman, a proud native Philadelphian, has committed his life to fighting inequality and defending civil rights on behalf of all people; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Council of the City of Philadelphia honors and recognizes the Honorable William T. Coleman, Jr. for his trailblazing efforts in the areas of civil rights, equality, and the law.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed Copy of this resolution be presented as a Sincere Expression of City Council's Appreciation and Recognition.

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