

Legislation Text

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Calling for the installation of a City historical marker, on the 17th Street side of the southeast corner of 17th and Chancellor Streets, to commemorate the nation's first sit-in for LGBT equality, held April 25, 1965, at the former Dewey's Restaurant.

WHEREAS, Philadelphia has played a seminal role in the birth of the LGBT Civil Rights Movement; and

WHEREAS, The LGBT Civil Rights Movement was informed and inspired by the African-American Civil Rights Movement; and

WHEREAS, In the early 1960s, the African-American Civil Rights Movement utilized lunch counter sit-ins to protest discrimination in public accommodations; and

WHEREAS, In early 1965, Dewey's Restaurant at 17th & Chancellor Streets was a popular location for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender patrons; and

WHEREAS, In April 1965, Dewey's adopted a policy to deny service to gays, lesbians, masculine women, feminine men, and those wearing non-conforming clothing; and

WHEREAS, The Janus Society was among the first gay and lesbian civil rights organizations in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, On April 25, 1965, about 150 people including Clark Polak, president of the Janus Society, took seats at Dewey's and refused to move when ordered to leave by Dewey's staff; and

WHEREAS, The police were called and Clark Polak was arrested along with three teenagers and found guilty of disorderly conduct; and

WHEREAS, In response to the arrests, activists handed out leaflets in front of Dewey's and otherwise demonstrated against the discriminatory policy; and

WHEREAS, On May 2, 1965, another sit-in occurred and no one was arrested by police; and

WHEREAS, By mid-May 1965, Dewey's rescinded its discriminatory policy; and

WHEREAS, This was the nation's first sit-in for LGBT equality in public accommodations; and

WHEREAS, In April to June 1965, early gay civil rights demonstrations also occurred in New York and Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, Those protests and the Dewey's sit-in helped lay the groundwork for the Annual Reminders where activists from New York, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., demonstrated at Independence Hall for gay and

lesbian equality each July 4th from 1965 to 1969. The Annual Reminders launched the LGBT Civil Rights Movement; and

WHEREAS, There are historical markers in Philadelphia for the Barbara Gittings Residence (1960s), Annual Reminders at Independence Hall (1965-1969), John Fryer, M.D. (1972-1973), Philadelphia Conference (1979) and AIDS Library of Philadelphia (1987); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That a historical marker be erected on the 17th Street side of the southeast corner of 17th & Chancellor Streets, and that the dedication of the Dewey's Sit-In historic marker be held in October, during LGBT History Month 2018.