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

Legislation Text

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Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the death of In-Ho Oh and the response by his parents offering forgiveness to the teenage murderers, requesting that the juveniles receive the "most generous treatment possible" allowed by law and establishing a fund to be used for their religious, educational, vocational and social guidance.

WHEREAS, On April 28, 1958, In-Ho Oh was murdered by a group of eleven African American juveniles after mailing a letter at the corner of 36th and Hamilton Streets; and

WHEREAS, In-Ho Oh was 26 years old at the time of his death. He was a graduate of Seoul National University and aspired to complete his education at the University of Pennsylvania and return to Korea to serve his people and his nation as a Christian Statesman; and

WHEREAS, The brutal and senseless murder of In-Ho Oh sent shock waves throughout Philadelphia and became national news; and

WHEREAS, The District Attorney sought to certify the juveniles as adults and obtain the death penalty. Cecil B. Moore would later serve as defense attorney for one of the nine defendants; and

WHEREAS, A letter arrived from the parents of In-Ho Oh, in which they wrote, "When we heard of his death, we could not believe the news was true, for the shock was so unexpected and sad . . . We thank God that He has given us a plan whereby our sorrow is being turned into Christian purpose. It is our hope that we may somehow be instrumental in the salvation of the souls, and in giving life to the human nature of the murderers. Our family has met together and we have decided to petition the most generous treatment possible within the laws of your government be given to those who have committed this criminal action . . . In order to give evidence of our sincere hope contained in this petition our whole family has decided to save money to start a fund to be used for the religious, educational, vocational and social guidance of the boys when they are released. In addition, we are daring to hope that we can do something to minimize such juvenile criminal actions which are to be found, not only in your country, but also in Korea, and, we are sure, everywhere in the world"; and

WHEREAS, The parent's letter and the story of In-Ho Oh was recounted in Life Magazine, Time Magazine, Guideposts, Power, The Inquirer, The Evening Bulletin, and re-enacted in a film entitled, "An Epistle from the Koreans" produced by The United Presbyterian Church in the USA; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Richardson Dilworth established the "Mayor's In-Ho Oh Memorial Scholarship" in conjunction with the University of Pennsylvania to provide full tuition to an undergraduate or graduate student from Korea; and

WHEREAS, In-Ho Oh's uncle, Pastor Ki Hang Oh, founder of Philadelphia's first Korean American Church, with whom he had been staying, established the "In-Ho Oh Memorial Korea Center" whose board members included Mayor Richardson Dilworth; Dr. Gaylord Harnwell, President of University of Pennsylvania; and J.

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Howard Pew, President of Sun Oil Company. It provided social, religious, educational and charitable service until Reverend Ki Hang Oh's death in 2006; and

WHEREAS, Marian Anderson twice attended events organized by Reverend Ki Hang Oh for the In- Ho Oh Memorial Center; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Ki Hang Oh was invited to preach at Zion Baptist Church by Reverend Leon Sullivan; and

WHEREAS, In-Ho Oh's parents asked that his body be buried in the United States. They wrote, " . . . we hope that you could spare a piece of land in your country and bury it there, for your land, too, is homeland for Christians and people of democratic society. It is our sincere hope that thus we will remember your people, and you will remember our people, and that both you and we will more vitally sense an obligation for the better guidance of juvenile delinquents, whose souls are unsaved and whose human natures are paralyzed. We hope in this way to make his tomb a monument which will call attention of people to this cause. We think this is a way to give life to the dead, and to the murderers, and to keep you and us closer in Christian love and fellowship"; and

WHEREAS, In-Ho Oh is buried in historic Old Pine Street Churchyard, 3rd and Pine Streets. He was the last body internment. Prior to his internment, the last burial was in the 1830's; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby commemorates the 60th Anniversary of the death of In-Ho Oh in the City of Philadelphia on April 28, 2018.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Ms. Za Yung Oh, wife of the late Pastor Ki Hang Oh, with whom In-Ho Oh had been staying at the time of his death, evidencing the sincere respect of this legislative body.