

Legislation Text

File #: 180873, **Version:** 0

Hereby recognizing October 9th as Charles W. Bowser Day in Philadelphia, in recognition of his lifelong dedication to public service and his significant contributions to the African American community in Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Charles Walker Bowser was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Charles A. and Viola Walker Bowser on October 9, 1930. Charles attended Reynolds Elementary School, Vaux Junior High School and Central High School. In 1948, Charles graduated from Central High School with a full athletic scholarship to play football at Temple University. In 1952, Charles graduated from Temple University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Journalism; and

WHEREAS, After graduating in 1952, Charles enlisted in the United States Armed Services and served as an Explosive Disposal Expert from 1952 to 1954 in Korea. After returning from Korea, Charles matriculated into Temple University School of Law, where he graduated in 1957 with his Juris Doctorate; and

WHEREAS, Shortly after graduating law school, Charles met and married Barbara Gertrude Potts following a three-month courtship. They were married for almost 50 years at the time of Barbara's death in 2008 and had three children together, Leslie, Marla and Charles, II; and

WHEREAS, Charles became a successful attorney in Philadelphia with his own practice but never forgot to give back to his community. Charles would sponsor Thanksgiving dinners for the homeless at Mount Olivet Tabernacle Baptist Church. Early in his career, he represented the NAACP, which resulted in the end of the use of "blackface" by marchers in the Mummers Parade; and

WHEREAS, In the 1960s, Charles embarked on his lifelong journey in public service. In 1964, he became the Executive Director of Philadelphia's Anti-Poverty Action Committee. In 1967, he was appointed the first African American Deputy Mayor. In 1968, he became the first Executive Director of the Philadelphia Urban Coalition. Under his leadership, in just two years, the net worth of the Urban Coalition grew from \$3.9 million to over \$12 million; and

WHEREAS, In 1975 and 1979, Charles ran for Mayor of Philadelphia, seeking to become the first African American to be elected to the office. In 1979, he earned 44% of the vote, carrying every black ward in the City and two white wards. By mounting such a powerful and historic challenge to the political status quo, he personally laid the solid foundation for the 1983 election of W. Wilson Goode, Sr. as the City's first African American mayor; and

WHEREAS, Throughout his lifetime, Charles remained committed to public service and served on numerous boards and commissions. Also, he was appointed as an official board member, political adviser, and legal counsel to such prestigious entities as: Thomas Jefferson University, St. Joseph's University, Temple University, the Salvation Army, the Pennsylvania Judicial Commission on Judicial Reform, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court Appellate Rules Advisory Committee, and most notably the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus; and

WHEREAS, Charles was also the recipient of many awards and accolades such as: the 2007 Tribune Leadership Award, the 2006 African American Chamber of Commerce Lifetime Achievement Award, the 2006 Black History Month Honoree by Governor Edward Rendell, the 2005 Philadelphia NAACP Cecil B. Moore Award, the 2002 State Nation Builder Award by the Black National Caucus of State Legislators, the 1998 Hall of Fame Award by the Philadelphia Barrister's Association, and the 1996 NAACP One Nation Award; and

WHEREAS, Charles W. Bowser was a powerful force who helped to shape the political landscape locally, statewide, and nationally. He will be remembered as a pioneer in the African American community, and his drive for change will never be forgotten; now, therefore, be it

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fred_Korematsu>

RESOLVED, That the Philadelphia City Council hereby recognizes October 9th as Charles W. Bowser Day in Philadelphia, in recognition of his lifelong dedication to public service and his significant contributions to the African American Community in Philadelphia.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Charles W. Bowser as a sincere expression of the Council of the City of Philadelphia's gratitude, admiration, and recognition.