



# City of Philadelphia

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

## Legislation Text

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Commending and recognizing the Honorable Lydia Y. Kirkland on the occasion of her retirement from her distinguished career as a Judge for the Philadelphia Municipal Court and her service to the legal community.

WHEREAS, The Honorable Lydia Y. Kirkland, a proud third-generation Philadelphian, has made a lasting impact on her community; and

WHEREAS As the great-granddaughter of enslaved individuals from Barnwell, South Carolina, she rose from humble beginnings in South Philadelphia to become a beacon of justice and equality; and

WHEREAS, Driven by a commitment to education and service, Judge Kirkland chose Howard University, where she earned both her Bachelor of Science and Juris Doctorate degrees, laying a strong foundation for her illustrious career; and

WHEREAS, Upon graduating from Howard Law School, Judge Kirkland received a prestigious fellowship from the Reginald Heber Smith Community Lawyer Fellowship Program, dedicating her early career to serving the residents of Delaware County, Pennsylvania, until 1978, after which she partnered with Councilwoman Augusta A. "Gussie" Clark, the first Democratic African American woman elected in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, In 1979, following Councilwoman Clark's election, Judge Kirkland established her own law firm, showcasing her entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to legal advocacy; and

WHEREAS In 1986 Judge Kirkland was seated a judge of the Philadelphia Municipal Court; and

WHEREAS, Throughout her tenure on the bench, Judge Kirkland exemplified leadership and dedication, serving as Secretary of the Board of Judges and supervising Judge of the Criminal Division, and chaired both the Racial and Ethnic Fairness Committee and the Municipal Court Committee for the Philadelphia Bar Association; and

WHEREAS, As an advocate for global justice, Judge Kirkland served as a member of the International Association of Women Judges, attending international courses focused on equitable access to justice in cities such as London, Buenos Aires, Sydney, Panama City, and Fez, Morocco, while also sharing her expertise as a visiting professor at the National Law School of India in Bangalore; and

WHEREAS, Judge Kirkland supervised the groundbreaking Project Dawn Court Diversionary Program, and spearheaded initiatives to provide critical mental health, addiction, and sexual abuse counseling for women in Philadelphia, where she established a model for similar programs nationwide; and

WHEREAS, Judge Kirkland's contributions have been widely recognized within the legal community, earning her numerous accolades including the Judge A. Leon Higginbotham Jr. Award, Judge Doris M. Harris Award, Judge Thurgood Marshall Award, and the Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm Award, alongside her induction into the South Philadelphia High School Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, A trailblazer in her field, Judge Kirkland co-founded the National Bar Association Women Lawyers Division of Philadelphia and played a crucial role in renaming the Criminal Justice Center in honor of Justice Juanita Kidd Stout, further cementing her legacy in the fight for justice and representation; and

WHEREAS, Throughout her remarkable career, Judge Kirkland has generously shared her wisdom and experience, treating her courtroom as a classroom where young attorneys felt safe to ask questions. She has mentored countless young attorneys, including Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Joanna McClinton, with warmth and encouragement, embodying the spirit of leadership and community service; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby commends and recognizes the Honorable Lydia Y. Kirkland upon the occasion of her retirement for her remarkable career as a Judge for the Philadelphia Municipal Court and her service to the legal community.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Judge Kirklan as evidence of the sincere admiration of this legislative body.