

Bill No. 4969-09

MOTION OF THE COUNCIL OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY

Expressing the Sense of Council of Allegheny County supporting the candidacy of Mr. Nate Smith, Sr. for the 2009 National Freedom Award by the National Civil Rights Museum located in Memphis, Tennessee.

WHEREAS, Nate Smith, Sr. was born on February 23, 1929, and raised in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, Nate served in the U.S. Navy from 1940 to 1942, followed by employment with the Local 66 of the Operating Engineers' Union as a heavy equipment operator; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Smith, a former professional boxer, is a legend in both African-American and labor circles in Pittsburgh for his peaceful but persistent negotiations with the building trade unions; and

WHEREAS, in the late 1950's and early 1960's, Mr. Smith became involved in the national civil rights movement, but he realized there was serious work to be done at home, and he argued that the unions were blocking the hiring of African-Americans and other minorities to work on Pittsburgh construction sites; and

WHEREAS, in 1969, Mr. Smith answered the unions' claims that there were no trained minorities for the construction field by creating 'Operation Dig' and within two years 90 African-Americans were card-holding union members working on various job sites throughout Western Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, in 1970, Operation Dig became a model for the nation through the U.S. Department of Labor; and

WHEREAS, in conjunction with the NAACP and other community and civil rights groups, Operation Dig formed the Black Construction Coalition to directly confront unfair hiring practices; and

WHEREAS, the Black Construction Coalition led to the creation of the Pittsburgh Plan, a joint venture of local government, unions, and community groups designed to oversee the smooth integration of African Americans into the building trades; and

WHEREAS, the Pittsburgh Plan became the model affirmative action plan for many home town plans throughout the country; and

plaque at Pittsburgh's historic Freedom Corner; located on a former stop on the Underground Railroad, Freedom Corner honors Pittsburgh citizens who fought for civil rights; and

WHEREAS, Pittsburgh's diverse construction industry continues to attract, train and employ minorities and women in greater numbers thanks to Mr. Smith's pioneering efforts nearly thirty (30) years ago;

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS MOVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY, supports any and all efforts to recognize and honor Mr. Nate Smith, Sr. by the National Civil Rights Museum, and this Council fully supports the nomination of Mr. Smith for the 2009 National Freedom Award by the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee.

PRIMARY SPONSOR: COUNCIL MEMBER McCULLOUGH

CO SPONSOR: COUNCIL MEMBER BURN, CLEARY, DEFAZIO, DROZD, ELLENBOGEN, FINNERTY, FUTULES, GASTGEB, GREEN, MACEY, REA, ROBINSON, PRESIDENT FITZGERALD & VICE PRESIDENT MARTONI

In Council

July 1st

, 2009.

Read and Approved.

Rich Fitzgerald
Rich Fitzgerald
President of Council

Attest:

[Signature]
Allegeny County Council