



# Allegheny County Council

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## Legislation Text

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Title...

Proclamations honoring the late K. Leroy Irvis and Anderson Little upon the occasion of the 2015 Spirit of King Award ceremony, presented by the Port Authority, along with the Kingsley Association, the Pittsburgh Pirates and the *New Pittsburgh Courier*.

Body...

WHEREAS, as a 2015 recipient of a Spirit of King Award, presented by the Port Authority, along with the Kingsley Association, the Pittsburgh Pirates and the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, Allegheny County Council does hereby honor the life of the Honorable K. Leroy Irvis, former Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, a 15-term member of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, who in 1977 became the first African-American Speaker of any state legislature; and

WHEREAS, K. Leroy Irvis was born in Saugerties, New York, on December 27, 1919, to Francis and Harriet Irvis; and

WHEREAS, K. Leroy Irvis graduated summa cum laude from the New York State Teachers College (now the State University of New York at Albany), received a master's degree from the State University of New York at Albany and earned a law degree from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law; and

WHEREAS, K. Leroy Irvis began his career teaching in the public schools of Baltimore; he then moved to Pittsburgh and took a job with the Urban League where he led groundbreaking demonstrations against discriminatory hiring policies; and

WHEREAS, K. Leroy Irvis was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 1958, representing the Hill District of Pittsburgh; he was subsequently reelected 15 consecutive times; and

WHEREAS, K. Leroy Irvis served the House of Representatives and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania with distinction as Minority Caucus Chairman, Majority Caucus Chairman, Minority Whip, Minority Leader and Majority Leader; and

WHEREAS, K. Leroy Irvis was elected the 130th Speaker of the House of Representatives on May 23, 1977 and became the first African-American elected as Speaker in a House of Representatives in the United States; and

WHEREAS, in his acknowledgment speech upon becoming Speaker, Mr. Irvis

remarked, "You have elected not a black man to be Speaker of the House of Representatives, but more importantly, you have elected a man who happens to be black, and that is the direction that this country must continue to go;" and

WHEREAS, K. Leroy Irvis served commendably as Speaker from 1977 to 1978 and from 1983 to 1988 and sponsored a record 264 bills that became law during his legislative career;

WHEREAS, K. Leroy Irvis was a key architect of landmark education initiatives, including the establishment of the state's community college system, creation of the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency and the measure that conferred state-related status on the University of Pittsburgh, Temple University and Lincoln University, a shift that addressed chronic financial problems at the three schools; and

WHEREAS, K. Leroy Irvis was respected by his colleagues, friends, family, constituents and fellow members of the General Assembly from both political parties as a true statesman, gentleman and professional; and

WHEREAS, K. Leroy Irvis, through a life of public service, came to embody faith in the concepts of responsive, humane, and responsible governance for generations of residents of the Commonwealth by championing bills promoting civil rights, fair housing, higher education, public health, highway safety, prison reform and African-American culture and the arts; Mr. Irvis retired from the House of Representatives in 1988; and

WHEREAS, K. Leroy Irvis was a published poet, wood sculptor, painter, supporter of the arts and founder in 1977 of the Legislative School Art Exhibit; and

WHEREAS, K. Leroy Irvis passed from this life on March 16, 2006, at the age of 86;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Allegheny County Council does hereby join with the Port Authority, the Kingsley Association, the Pittsburgh Pirates and the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, to honor the lifetime of service and achievement of the Honorable K. Leroy Irvis.

WHEREAS, as a 2015 recipient of a Spirit of King Award, presented by the Port Authority, along with the Kingsley Association, the Pittsburgh Pirates and the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, Allegheny County Council does hereby honor the life of the late Anderson P. Little, a prominent radio journalist who captured 33 years of African-American history in Pittsburgh; and

WHEREAS, Anderson P. Little grew up in public housing in the Hill District of Pittsburgh and became interested in broadcasting while attending high school in the Pittsburgh public schools and eventually worked in all areas of the business, as a disc jockey and in sales and promotions, before settling into a career in news and public

affairs; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Little was hired by WDUQ-FM at Duquesne University in 1972 to work with students and develop a community affairs voice at a time when there were few shows addressing minority issues; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Little worked in radio in Kansas City and, in Pittsburgh, at WAMO-FM, WAMO-AM, KQV-AM and WQED-TV. He hosted several programs over the years including, "Window Into the Community," "Community Perspective" and "Pittsburgh Perspective," which evolved into "The Anderson Little Report." The Anderson Little Report, which aired on WDUQ each Sunday, focused on many subjects, from jobs and education to social and cultural topics. Mr. Little's annual Black History Month specials explored such things as the segregation of the military during World War II and the Homestead Grays and Pittsburgh Crawfords baseball teams; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Little spent hours on location, recording speeches, seminars and community meetings, highlighting black struggles and achievement, in order to give audiences the full, unedited event; and

WHEREAS, in 1998, the U.S. House of Representatives recognized Mr. Little's work as a radio journalist. He received the New People Justice Award from the Thomas Merton Center and the Community Services and Communications Award from the Alleghenians Ltd., and was named 2003 Professional Man of the Year by the Pittsburgh Club of the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Little's work in broadcasting made him a leader in the African-American community; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Little passed from this life in June 2006 at the age of 66;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Allegheny County Council does hereby join with the Port Authority, the Kinglsey Association, the Pittsburgh Pirates and the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, to honor the lifetime of service and achievement of Anderson P. Little.