

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 201

In Memory  
of  
William Lawson

**WHEREAS**, Residents of Houston lost a giant of the civil rights movement and visionary community leader with the passing of the Reverend William A. Lawson on May 14, 2024, at the age of 95; and

**WHEREAS**, In 1962, while serving as director of the Baptist Student Union at Texas Southern University, Reverend Lawson established Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church, which became a center for students engaged in nonviolent protests against discrimination; he befriended Martin Luther King Jr., inviting him to speak at the church; Reverend Lawson chartered the Houston chapter of Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which he would lead for more than three decades; in the midst of upheaval across the nation, he quietly met with local business leaders, slipping through the back door of the whites-only Rice Hotel; his serenity, compassion, and unfailing good humor were crucial in bringing people together and maintaining calm during the swift desegregation of public facilities; and

**WHEREAS**, Reverend Lawson worked with other prominent faith leaders to address challenges confronting the city, among them homelessness, racism, and antisemitism; he persuaded other local religious institutions to commit to community development, and he set an example by including women as deacons and trustees of his church; even after retiring, he remained a tireless champion of the vulnerable and disenfranchised; the congregation named him founding pastor emeritus, and among myriad other accolades, the William A. Lawson Institute for Peace and Prosperity was established in his honor; he received honorary doctorates from Howard Payne University, the University of Houston, and TSU; and

**WHEREAS**, The son of William Lawson Sr. and Clarisse Riggs, Bill Lawson was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on June 28, 1928; he was raised with three siblings in Kansas City, Kansas, by his mother and her second husband, Walter Cade; after graduating from Tennessee State University, he went on to complete a bachelor's and master's degree at Central Baptist Theological Seminary; on January 30, 1954, he married the former Audrey Hoffman, and they were blessed with four children, Melanie, Cheryl, Eric, and Roxanne; he was preceded in death by his beloved wife and son; and

**WHEREAS**, Reverend Lawson left an indelible imprint on the city of Houston, and although he will be deeply missed, he will remain a source of enduring inspiration to all who were privileged to know him; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, That the Senate of the State of Texas, 89th Legislature, hereby pay tribute to the life of the Reverend William A. Lawson and extend sincere condolences to all who mourn his passing; and, be it further

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**RESOLVED**, That an official copy of this Resolution be prepared for his family and that when the Texas Senate adjourns this day, it do so in memory of William Lawson.

Miles, Alvarado, Birdwell  
Cook, Eckhardt, West

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Member, Texas Senate

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President of the Senate

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was adopted by the Senate on March 4, 2025, by a rising vote.

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Secretary of the Senate