



HR0715

LRB104 21072 ECR 35147 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives are saddened to learn of the death of Standish
4 E. "Kwame" Willis, Esq. of Chicago, who passed away on
5 February 28, 2025; and

6 WHEREAS, Stan Willis, born to Andrew and Plumie Willis on
7 August 16, 1941, was a lifelong Chicagoan who was raised on the
8 West Side and under the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) faith;
9 he was a first-generation high school graduate who enlisted
10 into the United States Air Force during the Vietnam War; after
11 being honorably discharged, he worked as a bus driver for the
12 Chicago Transit Authority (CTA), where he helped organize
13 several wildcat strikes, including the largest in Chicago's
14 history that disrupted travel city-wide during the 1968
15 Democratic National Convention, which helped win concessions
16 from the CTA union and led the City of Chicago to begin
17 dismantling racist policies and practices impacting Black
18 drivers; and

19 WHEREAS, Stan Willis, while still with the CTA, attended
20 Crane Junior College, where he was an active student leader;
21 during his studies, he led a march to protest the murders of
22 Black college students by South Carolina National Guardsmen in
23 Orangeburg, South Carolina; he also served as editor of the

1 college yearbook, founded the Afro-American History Club, and
2 was elected as president of Student Government, through which
3 he led the student movement to name the new campus after
4 Malcolm X; upon completing his associate's degree, he
5 transferred to the University of Chicago, earning a Bachelor
6 of Arts and a master's degree in Latin American Studies; he
7 studied economics at the master's degree level at the
8 University of Illinois Chicago, and he earned his Juris Doctor
9 from Chicago-Kent College of Law; and

10 WHEREAS, Stan Willis became a lawyer who specialized in
11 civil rights, police brutality and misconduct, criminal
12 defense work, and human rights; he initially joined Peoples'
13 Law Office (PLO) as a partner, during which time he also joined
14 the Lawyers for Washington movement; he served PLO for several
15 years prior to establishing his own firm, The Law Office of
16 Standish E. Willis, in 1989; he tried numerous federal jury
17 trials and several state jury and bench trials, and he argued
18 many cases before the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals; he
19 also litigated hundreds of civil rights lawsuits against many
20 municipalities involving public officials, served on the
21 Federal Defender Panel and its prestigious Selection
22 Committee, and was named one of Chicago's "Tough Lawyers" by
23 Chicago magazine in 2002; and

24 WHEREAS, Stan Willis taught in various settings over the

1 course of his professional life, devoting the same level of
2 dedication and rigor to the classroom that he brought to the
3 courtroom and community organizing; he taught a number of
4 courses, including the GED program at Malcom X College,
5 African American history at Stateville Correctional Center,
6 and economics at Roosevelt University for ten years; he was a
7 frequent guest lecturer at Chicago-area law schools and led
8 annual workshops for lawyers and lay people across the nation,
9 providing state-certified continuing legal education (CLE)
10 credits; he served as a faculty-lecturer for the annual civil
11 rights seminar sponsored by the Illinois Institute for
12 Continuing Legal Education (IICLE), the Chicago-Kent College
13 of Law, and the American Bar Association in the area of 42
14 U.S.C. 1983 on civil rights liability and litigation; he also
15 maintained speaking engagements on issues related to the
16 criminal justice system, the death penalty, police brutality,
17 community control of police, the prison-industrial complex,
18 America's political prisoners, racism and the American legal
19 system, international human rights, and reparations; further,
20 he was the subject of and contributed to chapters and articles
21 of numerous books, dissertations, and documentaries; and

22 WHEREAS, Stan Willis founded the grassroots organization
23 Black People Against Police Torture (BPAPT) in 2005; he led a
24 coalition of lawyers, activists, and community members to
25 internationalize the Chicago Police Torture cases by means of

1 international human rights mechanisms and treaties to which
2 the U.S. was subject; he presented evidence of police torture
3 before both the Organization of American States'
4 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 2005 and the
5 United Nations' Committee to Eliminate Racial Discrimination
6 (CERD) in 2008, helping to bring a modicum of justice in the
7 Chicago police torture cases by sparking the indictment of
8 former Chicago Police Department Commander Jon Burge; through
9 BPAPT, he called for reparations, was among the first to
10 challenge Chicago's right to host the Olympics, coined the now
11 familiar phrase of "the torture capital of the U. S.", and
12 personally initiated and drafted the legislative bill which
13 was ultimately enacted in 2009 in the form of the Illinois
14 Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission (TIRC), securing justice
15 and freeing many torture victims and survivors; and

16 WHEREAS, Stan Kwame was involved in many social justice
17 campaigns, including the Free South Africa Movement to end
18 Apartheid; he organized the African-American Defense Committee
19 Against Police Violence after the televised beating of Rodney
20 King in 1991 and The Riverdale Eight, a group of
21 African-American women who were brutalized by Riverdale police
22 officers, in 1995; he joined many abolitionists globally to
23 spare former Black Panther Party member Mumia Abu Jamal from
24 execution, organizing and chairing the African-American
25 Committee to Free Mumia Abu Jamal; he continued educating and

1 mobilizing support for all victims of racial and political
2 oppression, including the numerous victims of the notorious
3 Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) by authoring a
4 stakeholders' report on COINTELPRO Political Prisoners in
5 2010, which was submitted to the first UN Universal Periodic
6 Review (UPR) of the United States; he was also instrumental in
7 leading then-Governor George H. Ryan to clearing Illinois'
8 death row and commuting the death sentences of four men who had
9 been convicted based on tortured confessions; and

10 WHEREAS, Stan Willis was a longtime member of the National
11 Conference of Black Lawyers (NCBL), serving as chair of its
12 Chicago Chapter; he was a longtime board member for the Black
13 United Fund of Illinois (BUFI) and co-founded several
14 significant institutions, including the Communiversity, a
15 pre-cursor to the Center for Inner City Studies, the Black
16 Student Congress, African Liberation Day in Chicago, the
17 National Anti-Imperialist Movement in Solidarity with African
18 Liberation, the Chicago Conference of Black Lawyers/NCBL
19 affiliate, and the Office of HBCU Development and
20 International Cooperation (OHBCUD); he also served as a member
21 of the Durban 400 in 2001, helping secure a UN declaration that
22 the Transatlantic slave trade was a crime against humanity;
23 and

24 WHEREAS, Stan Willis was often recognized for his

1 unswerving commitment to social justice work and solidarity by
2 groups across racial, generational, and class lines, including
3 the National Lawyers Guild, the Arab American Action Network,
4 the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the Cook County Bar
5 Association, and the National Conference of Black Lawyers; he
6 became the namesake of the Standish E. Willis Community
7 Service Award by Black law students at Chicago-Kent College of
8 Law in 1984; and

9 WHEREAS, Stan Willis will be remembered as a tireless
10 advocate for oppressed communities across the globe who stayed
11 true to his Chicago roots and Pan African calling, remaining
12 guided by the needs of the community and the people; and

13 WHEREAS, Stan Willis was preceded in death by his parents
14 and his youngest brother, Sheldon "Rell"; and

15 WHEREAS, Stan Willis is survived by his wife, Sali Vickie
16 Casanova-Willis; his children, Lil' Reggie, Heavenly, Akiza,
17 Kimani, Ayesha, Amilcar, Charis, Ricky, Carlos, and Reyna; his
18 siblings, Winnette and Reginald; and a host of grandchildren,
19 great-grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren, cousins,
20 friends, and comrades; therefore, be it

21 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
22 HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that

1 we mourn the passing of Standish E. "Kwame" Willis, Esq. and
2 extend our sincere condolences to his family, friends, and all
3 who knew and loved him; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
5 presented to the family of Stan Willis as an expression of our
6 deepest sympathy.