

By: Representative Springer

## HOUSE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

TO REMEMBER LEGENDARY CIVIL RIGHTS ATTORNEY AND  
LONGTIME STATE REPRESENTATIVE JOHN W. WALKER, SR. FOR  
HIS LIFELONG FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND HIS  
SERVICE TO THE STATE OF ARKANSAS.

### Subtitle

TO REMEMBER LEGENDARY CIVIL RIGHTS  
ATTORNEY AND LONGTIME STATE  
REPRESENTATIVE JOHN W. WALKER, SR. FOR  
HIS LIFELONG FIGHT AGAINST  
DISCRIMINATION AND HIS SERVICE TO THE  
STATE OF ARKANSAS.

WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. was born on June 3, 1937, in Hope, Arkansas, and died October 28, 2019, at the age of eighty-two (82); and

WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. was an attorney, a civil rights activist, and a politician who served as a member of the House of Representatives from January 2011 until his death in 2019; and

WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. attended Henry C. Yerger High School in Hope, one of the few schools in rural Arkansas that provided a high school curriculum to Black children, before moving with his family to Houston, Texas, in 1952 and graduating from all-Black Jack Yates High School in 1954; and

WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. was the first Black undergraduate student



admitted to the University of Texas after the United States Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, but he still was not allowed to attend because of his race; and

WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. was also accepted to attend Howard University in Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. attended the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (then known as Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical, and Normal College) for his undergraduate degree and New York University for his master's degree, then obtained his Juris Doctorate at Yale University; and

WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr.'s first place of employment as an attorney was with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Legal Defense Fund in New York City, where he remained associated as a cooperating attorney and later as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Legal Defense Fund; and

WHEREAS, in 1965, John W. Walker, Sr. began his law practice in Little Rock with an emphasis on civil rights, and in 1968 opened one (1) of the first three (3) racially integrated law firms in the South; and

WHEREAS, between 1965 and the time of his death, John W. Walker, Sr. was personally involved in most of the reported cases involving racial discrimination in the State of Arkansas, many of which created new law and opened doors to all races in schools and places of work throughout the State of Arkansas and surrounding states; and

WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. was intimately involved with the legal battle to desegregate the Little Rock School District begun by the late Wiley A. Branton of Pine Bluff and future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, and Walker filed scores of successful lawsuits in federal courts to force Arkansas school districts to integrate or provide coequal learning environments; and

WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr.'s early cases often involved classes of people discriminated against by large corporations due to their race; and

WHEREAS, by 1970, John W. Walker, Sr. had become famous statewide for his nearly two (2) decades of prominent and tireless civil rights activism, and was appointed to the Board of Education by then-Governor Winthrop P. Rockefeller but was not confirmed to serve on the Board of Education; and

WHEREAS, one of John W. Walker, Sr.'s latter cases was the only nationwide racial discrimination case ever successfully brought against Walmart, Inc., and involved Black truck drivers; and

WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. received numerous awards from bar organizations including the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Legal Defense Fund, and the 2004 Southern Trial Lawyers Association's War Horse Award, and he was inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame in 1999; and

WHEREAS, upon his death, the body of John W. Walker, Sr. lay in state in the rotunda of the State Capitol Building and his picture remains on the wall of the House of Representatives' Quiet Room,

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

THAT the House of Representatives remember legendary civil rights attorney and longtime State Representative John W. Walker, Sr. for his lifelong fight against discrimination and his service to the State of Arkansas.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT upon adoption, a copy of this resolution be presented to the family of John W. Walker, Sr. by the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives.