

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 10-0203R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Conaway, Holton, D’Adamo, Branch, Middleton, Henry,
Curran, President Young, Councilmembers Cole, Reisinger, Welch, Clarke, Stokes, Spector
Introduced and adopted, with amendments: May 3, 2010

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION CONCERNING

**In Memory of Dr. Dorothy Height - 3/24/1912 - 4/20/2010
“Godmother of the Civil Rights Movement”**

FOR the purpose of celebrating the life of Dr. Dorothy Height, leading female voice of the 1960’s
Civil Rights Movement and longtime president of the National Council of Negro Women,
who died at the age of 98 after an 80-year campaign for social justice, gender equality, and
human rights.

Recitals

On Tuesday, August 20, 2010, the National Council of Negro Women, of which she was the
president emerita, announced the passing of Dr. Dorothy Height, at the age of 98. In a statement
expressing sadness on her passing, the President of the United States recognized Dr. Height as
“the godmother of the Civil Rights Movement and a hero to so many Americans” and, in a
proclamation on April 26, ordered flags across the nation, embassies, legations, consular offices
and facilities abroad to be flown at half-staff on the day of her interment.

Dr. Heights’ *New York Times* obituary states that she is widely credited as the first person in
the modern civil rights era to treat the problems of equality for women and the equality for
African-Americans as a seamless whole, merging concerns that had historically been largely
separate. “That the American social landscape looks as it does today owes in no small part to
Ms. Height. Originally trained as a social worker, she was president of the National Council of
Negro Women for four decades, from 1957 to 1997, overseeing a range of programs on issues
like voting rights, poverty and, in later years, AIDS.”

Dr. Height served for 10 years as national president of Delta Sigma Theta, from 1946 to
1957, prior to being selected to serve as president of the Council and remained active with the
Sorority throughout her life. While there she developed leadership training programs and
interracial and ecumenical education programs.

In news coverage of the Civil Rights Movement over the years, much was made of Dr. King
and the other so-called “Big Six” men in the forefront of the movement, while, as the only
woman who worked regularly alongside them on projects of national significance, Dr. Height
was very much the unheralded seventh, despite having begun her activism much earlier as a
teenager marching in New York’s Time Square shouting, “Stop the lynching”.

In 1963, Dr. Height, by then President, National Council of Negro Women, sat on the
platform at Dr. King’s side as he delivered his historical “I Have a Dream” speech. Although
she was one of the march’s chief organizers and a prizewinning orator herself, she was not asked

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

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1 to speak, though many black leaders, all men, addressed the crowd that day – highlighting the
2 double stigmatization she confronted throughout her long life – pushed to the margins of
3 women’s groups because of her race and to the margins of black groups because of her sex.

4 Dr Dorothy Height who received, among many others, the John F. Kennedy Memorial
5 Award, Congressional Black Caucus - Decades of Service, President Ronald Reagan Citizens
6 Medal, Franklin Roosevelt Freedom Medal, President Bill Clinton Presidential Medal of
7 Freedom, and the Congressional Gold Medal presented by President George W. Bush on her 92nd
8 birthday, as well as 36 Honorary Doctorate Degrees from prestigious universities and colleges,
9 was on January 20, 2009 awarded a well-deserved place of honor on the dias when the first
10 Black American took the oath of office as the nation’s 44th president.

11 A poem quoted in the forward to the memoir she authored in 2003, “Open Wide the Freedom
12 Gates”, aptly speaks to Dr. Height’s life and legacy:

13 *“I am a black woman*
14 *tall as a cypress*
15 *strong*
16 *beyond all definition still*
17 *defying place*
18 *and time*
19 *and circumstance*
20 *assailed*
21 *impervious*
22 *indestructible*
23 *Look*
24 *on me and be*
25 *renewed.”*

26 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE**, That this
27 Body celebrates the life and mourns the passing of Dr. Dorothy Height, leading female voice of
28 the 1060’s Civil Rights Movement and longtime president of the National Council of Negro
29 Women, who died at the age of 98 after an 80-year campaign for social justice, gender equality,
30 and human rights.

31 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor; the
32 President, NAACP; the President, National Council of Negro Women; the National President of
33 Delta Sigma Theta Sorority; the President, Baltimore Metropolitan Alumnae Chapter of Delta
34 Sigma Theta Sorority; and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.