

## 2009-J6298

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Local 371 President Charles Stephen Ensley, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to pay tribute to citizens of the State of New York whose lifework and civic endeavor served to enhance the quality of life in their communities and the great State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Charles Ensley died on Friday, June 18, 2010, at the age of 69; and

WHEREAS, President of Local 371 for 26 years, Charles Ensley was born in Birmingham, Alabama; he grew up amid the civil rights campaigns of the 1960s, and some of his principles came from his father, John, who in the 1950s led African-American workers against brutal opposition in a long battle for equal pay at the BIRMINGHAM NEWS; and

WHEREAS, Charles Ensley had unionism, equality and integrity in his DNA; growing up in Birmingham as the youngest of four children, he learned the importance of individual goals as well as group goals; and

WHEREAS, Charles Ensley graduated from Parker High School, at that time, the largest black high school in the country; he later went on to attend Howard University in Washington, DC; and

WHEREAS, Charles Ensley soon married, and both he and his wife, Annette, moved to New York in 1965; he became a caseworker in the Bureau of Child Welfare Bedford-Stuyvesant office, and also provided services in tutoring kids in Harlem and educating welfare rights groups; and

WHEREAS, In 1982, after a hotly contested election, with more than 70% of the vote, Charles Ensley became President of Local 371 and began demanding more democracy and financial accountability in the union; and

WHEREAS, Charles Ensley was an innovative, independent leader with

high integrity; possessing an amazing sense of humor and a quick wit, he fought with vigor and intelligence, and was proud of winning dignity and job protections for his members and never wavered in his steadfast determination to pursue a progressive agenda; and

WHEREAS, Charles Ensley believed that diversity is a major source of the strength of the Union; regardless of race, gender, blue collar or professional, the common ground has been defending the rights of every single union member; and

WHEREAS, Under Charles Ensley's leadership as a tough negotiator, Local 371 became the "Mighty, Mighty Union" and membership grew from 9,000 to 17,000 members; he received numerous awards for his work, among them the prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor in 2001; and

WHEREAS, Charles Ensley served on a number of boards, including the AFSCME International Executive Board; he enjoyed jazz, theatre, and reading that ranged from Russian literature to the French existentialists, with a particular interest in black history and the development of the black novel; in addition, he was a collector of black art and surrounded himself with some of the well known and lesser-known artists from around the world; and

WHEREAS, Prior to his death, Charles Ensley asked that everyone, particularly Local 371 members, use time, energy and resources in maintaining the Mighty, Mighty Union; he was a true asset to society; and

WHEREAS, Charles Ensley distinguished himself in his profession and by his sincere dedication and substantial contribution to the welfare of his community; and

WHEREAS, Charles Ensley's commitment to excellence, and his spirit of humanity, carried over into all fields of enterprise, including charitable and civic endeavors; and

WHEREAS, Charles Ensley is survived by his wife, Annette, his sister, Barbara Jean, his nephews, Bradley and Clarence, his niece, Imani, along with many cousins; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit, imbued with a sense of compassion, and comforted by a loving family, Charles Ensley's life was a portrait of service, a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all he served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Local 371 President Charles Stephen Ensley, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Charles Ensley.