

2013-J2758

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION mourning the death of Congressman Major Robert Odell Owens, 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, It is with great sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Congressman Major Robert Odell Owens, noting the significance of his purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Major Owens, who served in the House of Representatives until 2007, died on Monday, October 21, 2013; and

WHEREAS, Major Owens was born in Collierville, Tennessee, on June 28, 1936, to Ezekiel and Edna Owens; in 1956, the year he graduated from Morehouse, Mr. Owens married Ms. Ethel Werfel and was later re-married to the former Maria Cuprill; and

WHEREAS, After earning a master's degree in library science in 1957 from Atlanta University (which later became Clark Atlanta), Mr. Owens moved to New York City and worked as a librarian in Brooklyn from 1958 until the mid-1960s; as a librarian, he became a fixture in the Brooklyn Community working as a crusader for working class families which led him into fighting poverty as part of the Mayor John V. Lindsay Administration in the 1960s, and eventually into a position as a New York State Senator; and

WHEREAS, After serving Brooklyn as a State Senator, Major Owens ran successfully for the Congressional Seat previously held by Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, which he continued to serve for 24 years; among his many achievements include the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act and many years of increased funding for the historically black

colleges and universities; and

WHEREAS, After his retirement from Congress, Major Owens returned to the world of academia and taught at Medgar Evers College in Central Brooklyn; in his death, Brooklyn has lost a true hero who led by example and cared deeply for the community he lived in for so many years; and
WHEREAS, Congressman Major Owens distinguished himself in his profession and by his sincere dedication and substantial contribution to the welfare of his community; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Owens is survived by his wife, Maria, his children, Chris, Millard and Geoffrey, his brothers, Ezekiel Jr., Mack and Bobby, his sister, Edna, stepson, Carlos, stepdaughter, Cecilia, four grandchildren and four step-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Congressman Major Owens leaves behind 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 Congressman Major Robert Odell Owens, 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 Congressman Major Robert Odell Owens.