

## 2017-J4391

Senate Resolution No. 4391

BY: Senator COMRIE

MOURNING the death of Leslie Payne, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, distinguished citizen and devoted member of his community

WHEREAS, It is with great sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Leslie "Les" Payne, noting the significance of his purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Leslie Payne, a fervid and fearless Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, columnist and editor for Newsday who helped pave the way for a generation of black journalists, died on Monday, March 19, 2018, at the age of 76; and

WHEREAS, Leslie Payne was born on July 12, 1941, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama; his mother, Josephine, moved him and his two older brothers to Hartford in 1954; and

WHEREAS, After high school, Leslie Payne enrolled at the University of Connecticut, where he earned a bachelor's degree in English; he then spent six years in the United States Army, serving as a Ranger in Vietnam and earning the rank of Captain; and

WHEREAS, After joining Newsday in 1969, Les Payne exposed inequality and racial injustice in a largely white, segregated, suburban community;

a true trailblazer, he reported on such topics as apartheid in South Africa, illegally segregated schools in the American South and redlining by real estate agents in suburban New York; and

WHEREAS, Among Leslie Payne's first undercover assignments for Newsday was to spend a month in a migrant labor camp in Riverhead, in eastern Long Island, laying irrigation pipe on a potato farm; and

WHEREAS, Once he was armed with a weekly column, Leslie Payne established a reputation as a passionate champion of people who were powerless to defend themselves; and

WHEREAS, Leslie Payne was on the reportorial team that won a Pulitzer for public service in 1974, for a 33-part series, "The Heroin Trail," which traced a narcotics scourge from its source in Turkey to the mean streets of America; and

WHEREAS, Throughout his tenure, Leslie Payne was instrumental in helping the newspaper raise its profile beyond Long Island and in the transformation of Newsday into a fully rounded paper that covered the state, the nation and the world; and

WHEREAS, In addition to his illustrious career in journalism, Leslie Payne was a foreign correspondent, a teacher at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, and a founding member and former president of the National Association of Black Journalists; he retired from Newsday in 2006, as associate managing editor in charge of national and international coverage; and

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

WHEREAS, Leslie Payne is survived by his wife, the former Violet Cameron; two sons, Jamal and Haile; a daughter, Tamara; three brothers, John, Joseph and Raymond; and a sister, Mary Ann; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Leslie Payne 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 Leslie Payne, Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, 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 Leslie Payne.