

2023-J614

Senate Resolution No. 614

BY: Senator BAILEY

MOURNING the death of Willis Reed, legendary Hall of Fame Center for the Championship New York Knicks, celebrated NBA All-Star, MVP, and Captain

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to honor and pay just tribute to the memory of those prominent individuals whose esteemed careers in athletics and contributions to the sport of basketball have evolved the nature of the game, and fostered cultural enrichment, not just within their communities, but the entire State of New York; and

WHEREAS, It is with profound sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Willis Reed, noting the significance of his purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Willis Reed, the brawny and inspirational hub of two Knicks championship teams that captivated New York in the early 1970s with a sharp, team-oriented style of play, died on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, at the age of 80; and

WHEREAS, Affectionally known as The Captain, Willis Reed was a highly skilled 6-foot-10 center with a resolute physicality that was much admired over his illustrious 10-year career with the New York Knicks; and

WHEREAS, Truly beloved by New York fans, it was his willingness to

play hurt that brought Willis Reed his greatest measure of respect and fame; his grittiness was never more exemplified and celebrated than on May 8, 1970, in the decisive game of the NBA Finals, during which time he scored two thrilling baskets in the opening minutes of Game 7, inspiring his team and creating one of the most enduring examples of playing through pain; and

WHEREAS, Born on June 25, 1942 in Hico, Louisiana, Willis Reed showed athletic ability at an early age and played basketball at West Side High School in Lillie, Louisiana, before attending Grambling State University, a historically black college, where he amassed 2,280 career points, averaging 26.6 points per game and 21.3 rebounds per game during his senior year; he led the Tigers to one NAIA Title and three Southwestern Athletic Conference Championships; and

WHEREAS, Selected by the Knicks in the second round of the 1964 Draft, Willis Reed signed with the franchise for approximately \$10,000, and quickly made a name for himself as a fierce, dominating, and physical force on both ends of the floor; in March of 1965, he scored 46 points against the Los Angeles Lakers, the second-highest single-game total ever by the Knicks' rookie; and

WHEREAS, In an astounding career which traversed a decade, Willis Reed earned a place in the Knicks top 10 in nearly every category, and was among the top three in minutes played (23,073), field goals made (4,859), rebounds (8,414), and total points (12,183); and

WHEREAS, Willis Reed won the NBA's Most Valuable Player Award for the 1969-70 season and was named the MVP of the championship series; he won the Rookie of the Year Award in 1965, was voted an All-Star seven times, and won another NBA Title and Finals MVP with the Knicks in 1973; for his career, he averaged 18.7 points and 12.9 rebounds per game; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, he was chosen by the NBA for its 50th and 75th Anniversary Teams, and in 1996, he was chosen by the NBA as one of its 50 greatest players; his renowned No. 19 uniform jersey, white with blue and orange trim, was the first to be retired by the Knicks on October 21, 1976; he was enshrined in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 1982; and

WHEREAS, Off the court, Willis Reed was a gentle giant, flashing an easy smile and typically extending a large hand to greet friends and acquaintances; within the Knicks organization, he was known to be generous with teammates in an era when financial rewards in professional sports were not as substantial as they are today; and

WHEREAS, With an enduring presence at the Garden and in New York, Willis Reed spent his entire professional basketball career, 1964 to 1974, with the Knicks; a legend among men, he was the perfect heartbeat of those two Knicks championship teams and possessed intangible qualities the franchise has been unable to duplicate: heart and inexhaustible effort; and

WHEREAS, In the game of basketball, some seasons are only worth a moment, some moments are worth an entire season; some moments define a career; Willis Reed made the most of his moment and will forever be remembered as a class act, a team player, a humble winner, and a role model for how to play the game; his ceaseless dedication to the sport of basketball has not only been an inspiration to his countless fans, but to his teammates with whom he shared years of tough losses and great victories; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the death of Willis Reed, and to express its deepest condolences to his family; and be it further

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