



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1169

Resolution commemorating the life and achievements of Sandra Feldman.

By Council Members Nelson, Brewer, Comrie, Gennaro, Gerson, Jackson, Katz, Liu, McMahon, Recchia Jr., Sanders Jr., Seabrook, Weprin and The Public Advocate (Ms. Gotbaum)

Whereas, Sandra Feldman, the former president of the United Federation of Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers, died on September 19, 2005 at the age of 65; and

Whereas, Sandra Feldman was born in Brooklyn on October 18, 1939, and grew up in Coney Island in a poor family whose father was a milkman and whose mother occasionally worked behind the counter of a bakery; and

Whereas, Sandra Feldman attributed her ability to identify with “those who suffered” to her difficult childhood experiences; and

Whereas, Sandra Feldman attended New York City public schools, including James Madison High School, from which she graduated at the age of 16, and Brooklyn College of the City University of New York; and

Whereas, While pursuing her Master’s Degree in English at New York University, Sandra Feldman began teaching at P.S. 34, an elementary school on the Lower East Side of Manhattan; and

Whereas, During the turbulent 1960’s, Sandra Feldman took part in the nation’s struggle against racial segregation, participating in civil rights marches in the South; and

Whereas, Sandra Feldman was a field representative for the United Federation of Teachers during the Ocean Hill-Brownsville crisis of 1968, which culminated in a five-week teacher strike; and

Whereas, In 1983, Sandra Feldman became the first woman and first teacher to be the grand marshal of

the City's Labor Day parade; and

Whereas, In 1986, Sandra Feldman became the president of the United Federation of Teachers, replacing Albert Shanker, her mentor, who had resigned to concentrate his duties on the presidency of the national American Federation of Teachers; and

Whereas, As president of the United Federation of Teachers, Sandra Feldman was critical of the City's then Board of Education, which she said was "impervious to the education reform movements;" and

Whereas, During her tenure as head of the United Federation of Teachers, Sandra Feldman became a vocal advocate for both students and union members by lobbying for smaller class sizes, increased investments in school facilities and higher teacher salaries; and

Whereas, In 1997, Sandra Feldman became the president of the American Federation Teachers, when her mentor, Albert Shanker, retired; and

Whereas, During her leadership of the American Federation of Teachers, Sandra Feldman urged the closing of bad schools, supported letting principals hire teachers without being hamstrung by seniority rules, backed rigorous teacher training and abhorred social promotion; and

Whereas, Sandra Feldman always insisted that her members do their utmost to educate poor and disadvantage kids, knowing that for them, as was the case for her, education was the way out of poverty; and

Whereas, Sandra Feldman stepped down from the presidency of the American Federation of Teachers in 2004 to battle the breast cancer that would ultimately claim her life; and

Whereas, Sandra Feldman was one of the nation's most influential labor leaders; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York commemorates the life and achievements of Sandra Feldman.

9/23/2005

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