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Res. No. 758

IN MEMORIAM - Shirley Chisholm

By the Entire Council.

Whereas, The Council has learned with deep sorrow of the passing, on January 1, 2005 1999, of Shirley Chisholm, educator, politician, activist, former Congresswoman and friend to the people of New York; and

Whereas, Shirley Chisholm leaves behind a legacy of great good works and significant accomplishments. She was by all accounts a political trailblazer who categorically refused to accept the status quo and who wasn't afraid to speak her mind, especially when it was a question of fair and equal treatment for herself and for others; and

Whereas, Born to West Indian parents in Brooklyn, Shirley Chisholm spent her early childhood years with her grandmother in Barbados before returning to New York at age ten to continue her education; and

Whereas, Shirley Chisholm began her professional career as a nursery school teacher and also worked as an educational consultant with the city's bureau of child welfare before entering into political life and

successfully running for the state Assembly in 1964; and

Whereas, In 1968, Shirley Chisholm made history when she became the first black woman elected to Congress. Suddenly catapulted to a place of national prominence and a position of extraordinary visibility, Shirley Chisholm took her seat in the House in 1969 and immediately set about shaking up the old, established order, most notably the House seniority system; and

Whereas, When she was assigned to the House Agricultural Committee-a position she felt was “irrelevant to her urban constituency,” Ms. Chisholm spoke her mind and succeeded in being reassigned to the Veteran Affairs Committee; and

Whereas, Shirley Chisholm epitomized the great American quality of self-reliance. Her many successes and achievements, often in the face of often overwhelming odds, are powerful reminders of her faith, her determination and her fierce intelligence; and

Whereas, In 1972, Shirley Chisholm further solidified her place in history when she became the first woman to seek the Democratic presidential nomination. The courage and vision she demonstrated continue to inspire others today; and

Whereas, As a Congresswoman, Shirley Chisholm represented the interests and protected the rights of those in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. During her seven terms in the House she earned a reputation as a firebrand with a gift for oratory, an outspoken champion of women, minorities and the disadvantaged, and a staunch critic of the Vietnam War; and

Whereas, Shirley Chisholm was a great pioneer for opportunity whose life of altruism and principle make her a role model in the truest sense of the term; and

Whereas, For all that she has done, as a private citizen, as Congresswoman, as activist and advocate for the rights of the underserved, New York City is a richer, better place, with greater opportunities for minorities and with a government more responsive to the needs of its constituents; and

Whereas, Although Shirley Chisholm is no longer with us, her spirit rests in the hearts of all who knew and worked with her - to whom she was an inspiration-- and with the people of the City of New York; now, therefore

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York commemorates the life and mourns the death of Shirley Chisholm, who has served the people of New York in all the phases of her public life. The Council expresses its deepest sympathy to her beloved family and adjourns today in her memory.