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Res. No. 739

Resolution calling for the Council of the City of New York to highlight and honor the life and achievements of Judge Jane Bolin.

By Council Members Comrie, Fidler, Gonzalez, Nelson, Seabrook and Weprin

Whereas, Judge Jane Bolin, first black woman in the United States to become a judge, died on January 8, 2007, at the age of ninety-eight; and

Whereas, Although initially discouraged to pursue a career in law by a Wellesley College guidance counselor and her father, Gaius C. Bolin, who had his own legal practice and was president of the Dutchess County Bar Association, she graduated from Wellesley College and was named a Wellesley Scholar in 1928, became the first black woman to graduate from Yale Law School and was the first to join the New York City Bar Association; and

Whereas, After graduating from Yale, she practiced for a short time with her father in Poughkeepsie, and in 1937, applied for a position in the New York City corporation counsel’s office, subsequently was assigned to

the Domestic Relations Court, and became the first black woman to work in the city's legal department; and

Whereas, On July 22, 1939, was sworn in as a family court judge by Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia, in a ceremony that took place at the New York City building at the 1939 World's Fair; and

Whereas, As a family court judge, her cases included homicides and crimes committed by juveniles, neglected children, adoptions, battered spouses, and paternity suits, which, in turn, led to some of her many transcendent achievements such as ending the assignment of probation officers on the basis of race and the placement of children in child-care agencies on the basis of ethnic background; and

Whereas, Judge Bolin was reappointed to ten year terms by Mayors William O'Dwyer, Robert F. Wagner Jr., and John V. Lindsay; and

Whereas, In January 1979, Judge Bolin reached the mandatory retirement age of seventy, and reluctantly retired after forty years as a judge; and

Whereas, After retirement, she remained active in the community as a volunteer reading instructor in New York City public schools for two years, and was appointed to the Regents Review Committee of the New York State Board of Regents; and

Whereas, Judge Bolin was outspoken on civil rights issues and her broad sympathy for human suffering will be long remembered; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York honors the life and achievements of Judge Jane Bolin.

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