



HR0801

LRB100 19704 ALS 34978 r

1 HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, George N. Leighton is one of the most
3 distinguished citizens of Illinois; he served in the army
4 during the Second World War, became a renowned civil rights
5 lawyer, and earned further respect as a federal judge; and

6 WHEREAS, George Leighton was born to immigrant parents in
7 Massachusetts, grew up in poverty, worked with his parents in
8 cranberry bogs, and was unable to attend high school; and

9 WHEREAS, Despite not having graduated high school, George
10 Leighton earned a scholarship to college and attended Howard
11 University, where he studied history; he then earned admission
12 and a scholarship to Harvard Law School; and

13 WHEREAS, When the United States entered the Second World
14 War, George Leighton entered service as an ROTC Second
15 Lieutenant in the segregated 93rd Infantry Division of the
16 Army, serving as a logistics officer in the Pacific campaign;
17 he earned a Bronze Star and was discharged with the rank of
18 Captain in 1945; and

19 WHEREAS, Upon returning home after the war, George Leighton
20 returned to Harvard Law, completed his degree, passed the bar,
21 and moved to Chicago in 1946; and

1 WHEREAS, As a criminal defense lawyer in Chicago, George
2 Leighton took on key civil rights cases in a number of areas,
3 including voting rights, school desegregation, and housing
4 integration; in 1951, he founded a predominantly African
5 American law firm that became one of the largest such firms in
6 the country; in 1952, he became the president of the Chicago
7 branch of the NAACP; and

8 WHEREAS, George Leighton was elected as a Cook County
9 Circuit Court judge in 1964 and served as one of the few
10 African American judges in the county; he was the first African
11 American judge appointed to the Illinois Appellate Court, and
12 he served ten years as a U.S. District Court judge, retiring at
13 the age of 74; he then continued practicing law; and

14 WHEREAS, George Leighton, now aged 105, wishes to be buried
15 as a soldier in Arlington National Cemetery; however, Arlington
16 National Cemetery has strict regulations for allowing burial,
17 such that a candidate must have served 20 years active duty,
18 been a prisoner of war, earned a Purple Heart, Silver Star, or
19 higher decoration, or died while on active duty; waivers may be
20 granted by the Secretary of the Army, or, in special cases, the
21 Secretary of Defense or the President of the United States; and

22 WHEREAS, The Veterans Caucus of the Chicago City Council

1 plans to introduce a resolution urging the federal government
2 to grant George Leighton's request, and Senator Richard Durbin
3 has recently joined this effort by announcing his support and
4 pledging to help in any way he can; and

5 WHEREAS, George Leighton has honorably served the United
6 States and the State of Illinois as a soldier during the Second
7 World War, a staunch promoter of civil rights, and as a pioneer
8 judge; therefore, be it

9 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
10 HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we
11 support Senator Durbin and the Veterans Caucus of the Chicago
12 City Council in this effort, and we urge the federal government
13 to grant George N. Leighton's request to be buried in Arlington
14 National Cemetery; and be it further

15 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
16 delivered to Senator Richard Durbin, the Secretary of the Army,
17 the Secretary of Defense, and the President of the United
18 States.