

2026 SESSION

ENROLLED

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 86

Celebrating the life of Ola Parker Willoughby.

Agreed to by the Senate, March 5, 2026

WHEREAS, Ola Parker Willoughby, a distinguished civilian employee of the United States Marine Corps, devoted wife and mother, and active and beloved member of the Arlington County community, died on February 9, 2026; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from Gary District High School in Gary, West Virginia, in 1938, Ola Willoughby studied at Morristown College and later transferred to and graduated from Bennett College; and

WHEREAS, Ola Willoughby briefly taught at Gary District High School before relocating to Arlington, where she took a civilian position with the United States Marine Corps (USMC); and

WHEREAS, Ola Willoughby went on to devote 30 years to the country through her service with the USMC, retiring in 1976 as deputy director of the Decorations and Medals Division; and

WHEREAS, during her career, Ola Willoughby was notably the first African American to serve as an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) officer for the USMC, a role in which she helped implement EEO initiatives and policies and assisted African Americans in obtaining positions and promotions within the USMC; and

WHEREAS, Ola Willoughby gave generously of her time for the benefit of her community over the years, including by reactivating the Penrose Neighborhood Association and by spearheading the construction of a home for physically challenged individuals in her neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, as a result of her advocacy and work with the Arlington County Democratic Committee, Ola Willoughby was appointed to the Arlington County Civil Service Commission, where she served from 1978 through 1986 and broke down barriers as the commission's first African American chair; and

WHEREAS, Ola Willoughby indefatigably continued to serve the community into her late 90s through her work with a number of organizations, including the Arlington County Retirement Board, the Advisory Council of the Northern Virginia Urban League, United Way of the National Capital Area, the Veterans Memorial Branch YMCA, and the Arlington Civic Coalition for Minority Affairs; and

WHEREAS, Ola Willoughby was a proud and longstanding member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and she served the Northern Virginia Alumnae Chapter in myriad leadership roles, including as president and committee chair; and

WHEREAS, guided throughout her life by her faith, Ola Willoughby enjoyed worship and fellowship with her community at Mount Zion Baptist Church in Arlington for 78 years, where she served the congregation in various capacities, including as a Sunday school teacher, program director of the Educational Guild and Tutorial Ministry, and chair of the Historical Commission; and

WHEREAS, preceded in death by her husband of 59 years, Samuel, and her daughter, Cheryl, Ola Willoughby will be fondly remembered and dearly missed by her daughter, Joyce, and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of Virginia hereby note with great sadness the loss of Ola Parker Willoughby, a trailblazing member of the Arlington County community whose integrity, service, and dedication made a lasting impact on countless lives; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Ola Parker Willoughby as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's respect for her memory.

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