

Milwaukee Ald. Coggs: Common Council unanimously approves establishing the Vel R. Phillips Trailblazer Award

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Today, the Common Council unanimously approved a resolution to create the Vel R. Phillips Trailblazer Award. In honor of Vel R. Phillips' work for the City of Milwaukee and the Common Council, all 15 council members are sponsors of the resolution.

The legislation, which was introduced by Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs, established the annual award to recognize Milwaukee residents who best exemplify Vel R. Phillip's legacy of social justice and civic accomplishment. The Vel R. Phillips Trailblazer Award selection committee, also created by this resolution, will consist of two members appointed by the mayor and three members chosen by Common Council President Ashanti Hamilton. The committee will accept nominations for the award from members of the public or local organizations. The Vel R. Phillips Trailblazer Award will be presented to its recipient each year during the Girls' Day event at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St.

"Vel R. Phillips defines trailblazing with her progressive advocacy and perseverance in the face of adversity," said Alderwoman Coggs. "There is no better way to honor her and the substantial and historic work she has done to improve our community than with the creation of this annual award."

Ms. Phillips, the first African American woman to graduate from the University of

Wisconsin Law School, is an advocate for civil rights, equal and fair housing laws, education, and equal employment. In 1956, she was elected to the Common Council as the first African American and the first woman to join the legislative body. In 1962, Ms. Phillips proposed the Fair Housing Law, which took six years to pass in the Common Council. She later became the first female judge in Milwaukee County, the first African American judge in Wisconsin, and the first female and the first non-white Secretary of State in Wisconsin. Ms. Phillips continues to be a champion for change as a board member of the Vel Phillips Foundation which promotes equality and opportunity for minority communities.