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**MEMORIAL  
COPY**



**JOURNAL of the PROCEEDINGS  
of the  
CITY COUNCIL  
of the  
CITY of CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

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**Special Meeting -- Friday, February 1, 2008**

**at 10:00 A.M.**

**(Council Chamber -- City Hall -- Chicago, Illinois)**

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**OFFICIAL RECORD.**

**RICHARD M. DALEY  
Mayor**

**MIGUEL DEL VALLE  
City Clerk**

**Attendance At Meeting.**

*Present* -- The Honorable Richard M. Daley, Mayor, and Aldermen, Fioretti, Dowell, Preckwinkle, Hairston, Lyle, Jackson, Harris, Beale, Pope, Balcer, Cárdenas, Olivo, Burke, Foulkes, Thompson, Thomas, Lane, Rugai, Cochran, Brookins, Muñoz, Zalewski, Dixon, Solis, Ocasio, E. Smith, Carothers, Reboyas, Suarez, Waguespack, Mell, Austin, Colón, Banks, Mitts, Allen, O'Connor, Reilly, Daley, Tunney, Levar, Shiller, Schulter, Moore, Stone.

*Absent* -- Aldermen Flores, Burnett, Laurino, Doherty, M. Smith.

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**Call To Order.**

On Friday, February 1, 2008 at 10:23 A.M. (the hour appointed for the meeting was 10:00 A.M.), the Honorable Richard M. Daley, Mayor, called the City Council to order. The Honorable Miguel del Valle, City Clerk, called the roll of members and it was found that there were present at that time: Aldermen Fioretti, Dowell, Preckwinkle, Hairston, Lyle, Jackson, Harris, Beale, Pope, Balcer, Cárdenas, Olivo, Burke, Foulkes, Thompson, Thomas, Lane, Rugai, Cochran, Brookins, Muñoz, Zalewski, Dixon, Solis, Ocasio, E. Smith, Carothers, Reboyas, Suarez, Waguespack, Mell, Austin, Colón, Banks, Mitts, Allen, O'Connor, Reilly, Daley, Tunney, Levar, Shiller, Schulter, Moore, Stone -- 45.

Quorum present.

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**OPENING MUSICAL SELECTION.**

Mr. Milas Armour performed the musical selection "In This Very Room".

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*Placed On File* -- CALL FOR SPECIAL MEETING.

The Honorable Miguel del Valle, City Clerk, informed the City Council that the following call for a special meeting was filed in his office on Tuesday, January 29, 2008 at 9:24 A.M.:

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

January 28, 2008.

*Honorable Miguel del Valle  
City Clerk  
City Hall, Room 107  
121 North LaSalle Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60602*

DEAR MR. DEL VALLE -- I hereby call a special meeting of the City Council of the City of Chicago, to be convened at 10:00 A.M. on Friday, February 1, 2008, in the City Council Chambers in City Hall, for the sole purpose of honoring the life and memory of Mayor Eugene Sawyer.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) RICHARD M. DALEY,  
Mayor.

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**Pledge Of Allegiance.**

Alderman Hairston led the City Council and assembled guests in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

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**Invocation.**

Pastor Jerald January, Sr. of Vernon Park Church of God opened the meeting with prayer.

2/1/2008

SPECIAL MEETING

19869

MUSICAL SELECTION.

Mr. Milas Armour performed the musical selection "Wind Beneath My Wings".

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*Rules Suspended* -- RESOLUTION HONORING LIFE AND  
MEMORY OF MAYOR EUGENE SAWYER, JR.

The Honorable Richard M. Daley, Mayor, presented the following communication:

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

February 1, 2008.

*To the Honorable, The City Council of the City of Chicago:*

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN -- I transmit herewith a resolution honoring the life and memory of Mayor Eugene Sawyer.

Your favorable consideration of this resolution will be appreciated.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) RICHARD M. DALEY,  
*Mayor.*

The following is said proposed resolution:

WHEREAS, The members of this chamber were greatly saddened to learn of the death at age seventy-three of their friend and former colleague, and former Mayor of the City of Chicago, Eugene Sawyer, Jr. on January 19, 2008; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Eugene Sawyer, who served in that office from December of 1987 until May of 1989, was a voice of calm and reason in the difficult times that followed the sudden death of Mayor Harold Washington; and

WHEREAS, Eugene "Gene" Sawyer was born in Greensboro, Alabama, on September 3, 1934, to Bernice and Eugene Sawyer, Sr., and was the oldest of six children; and

WHEREAS, Even as a young man, Eugene Sawyer demonstrated outstanding leadership skills. At Hale County Training High School, he was a quarterback of the football team and the senior class president, and he graduated as salutatorian; and

WHEREAS, As a college student at Alabama State University in Montgomery, Eugene Sawyer was involved in the Civil Rights Movement from its very beginning, as he and his Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity brothers helped Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to carry out the historic Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955; and

WHEREAS, He graduated from Alabama State University in 1956 with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology and mathematics, and he taught high school mathematics and chemistry for one year in Prentiss, Mississippi; and

WHEREAS, In 1957, he moved to Chicago, where he soon was hired as an industrial waste coordinator for the City's Department of Water and Sewers; and

WHEREAS, Eugene Sawyer worked hard to support his family and received a number of well-deserved promotions with the City. He also found the time to join the 6<sup>th</sup> Ward Democratic Organization, where his talent and diligence led to expanded duties and responsibilities; and

WHEREAS, He was first elected alderman of Chicago's 6<sup>th</sup> Ward in 1971, and served with honor and distinction in that office under four different mayors; and

WHEREAS, While serving as alderman, he was the first African-American elected official to endorse Harold Washington's candidacy for mayor, and he became president pro tempore of the City Council and chairman of the City Council Committee on Committees, Rules and Ethics under Mayor Washington; and

WHEREAS, On December 2, 1987, after a meeting of the City Council following the death of Mayor Washington, Eugene Sawyer was selected by his colleagues to serve as the mayor of the City of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, As the City's second African-American mayor, Mayor Sawyer sought not only to heal a city that had been plagued by divisiveness, but also to adopt policies and advance legislation that benefitted all Chicagoans; and

WHEREAS, Among his many accomplishments as mayor were the passage of the City's Human Rights Ordinance and the Clean Indoor Air Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, Throughout his life, Eugene Sawyer was a deeply religious man. He was a member of the Vernon Park Church of God for the last three decades, serving as a member of the trustee board, and later as an elder; and

WHEREAS, A gentlemanly, gracious and soft-spoken man, Eugene Sawyer has earned an unshakable place in Chicago history for his effective and compassionate leadership; and

WHEREAS, Eugene Sawyer is survived by his wife, Veronica; two sons, Roderick, Sr. and Shedrick; a daughter, Sheryl McGill; four grandchildren, Jessica, Alexandria, Sydni and Roderick, Jr.; three brothers, John, III, Ernest and Charles, Sr.; a sister, Shirley; and countless other family members and friends; now, therefore,

*Be It Resolved*, That we, the Mayor and members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, assembled this first day of February, 2008, do hereby mourn the loss of former City of Chicago Mayor Eugene Sawyer and extend to his family our deepest condolences and express our most heartfelt sorrow for their loss; and

*Be It Further Resolved*, That a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Eugene Sawyer as a sign of our honor, sympathy and respect.

Alderman Burke moved to *Suspend the Rules Temporarily* to permit immediate consideration of and action upon the foregoing proposed resolution. The motion *Prevailed*.

On motion of Alderman Burke, the foregoing proposed resolution was *Adopted* by a rising vote.

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#### TRIBUTES BY MEMBERS OF THE CHICAGO CITY COUNCIL.

Expressions of sorrow and words of remembrance about Mayor Eugene Sawyer were shared by the following members of the City Council:

Alderman Toni Preckwinkle  
(4<sup>th</sup> Ward)

Alderman Leslie Hairston  
(5<sup>th</sup> Ward)

Alderman Freddrenna M. Lyle  
(6<sup>th</sup> Ward)

Alderman Michelle Harris  
(8<sup>th</sup> Ward)

Alderman Edward M. Burke  
(14<sup>th</sup> Ward)

Alderman Howard B. Brookins, Jr.  
(21<sup>st</sup> Ward)

Alderman Ed H. Smith  
(28<sup>th</sup> Ward)

Alderman Regner "Ray" Suarez  
(31<sup>st</sup> Ward)

Alderman Richard M. Mell  
(33<sup>rd</sup> Ward)

Alderman Carrie M. Austin  
(34<sup>th</sup> Ward)

Alderman Patrick J. O'Connor  
(40<sup>th</sup> Ward)

Alderman Thomas M. Tunney  
(44<sup>th</sup> Ward)

Alderman Patrick J. Levar  
(45<sup>th</sup> Ward)

Alderman Helen Shiller  
(46<sup>th</sup> Ward)

Alderman Eugene C. Schulter  
(47<sup>th</sup> Ward)

Alderman Bernard L. Stone  
(50<sup>th</sup> Ward)

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MUSICAL SELECTION.

Members of the James E. McDade Classical School Choir performed the musical selections "One Candle One Flame" and "This Little Light of Mine".

## EULOGY BY THE HONORABLE RICHARD M. DALEY.

On behalf of all the people of the City of Chicago, I am honored to join you in celebrating the life and mourning the death of Mayor Eugene Sawyer.

He was a good and decent man and a public servant of the highest order.

He was quiet and unassuming, but as his record shows, he knew how to accomplish things for his community and for the entire City of Chicago.

That's why, as we grieve his loss today, we also celebrate the many things he did to make Chicago a better place.

Through a combination of ability, integrity and personal warmth that we will all remember for a long time, he helped create opportunity for Chicagoans of all backgrounds.

For more than 16 years in the City Council, he served the people of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ward with distinction and caring. He was tireless in devoting his energy to this city and its people.

And it is that spirit of commitment to the community-at-large that is Gene Sawyer's great legacy.

At perhaps the most divisive time in our city's political history, Mayor Eugene Sawyer started us on the road back to civility and racial understanding.

He helped bring calm to a divided city.

In his heart, he knew that continued divisiveness would destroy our city, and he did his best to help begin the process of healing.

And, today, we appreciate the historic contribution he made by helping to change our tone of discussion and debate.

That spirit remains alive today for Chicagoans.

As alderman and as mayor, he opened doors for people and was always respectful of them.

Those of us who knew him and worked with him are fortunate to have had that privilege.

We all benefit from his years of dedication and service to our community.

On behalf of all Chicagoans, I offer my condolences to Veronica, to Sheryl, Roderick and Shedrick, to his brothers and sister and to his grandchildren.



And I also offer them my thanks for the love and support they gave Gene that helped make his accomplishments in public service possible.

His was a life that made a difference.

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At this point in the proceedings, the Honorable Richard M. Daley, Mayor, left the rostrum and strode to the commissioners' gallery where he expressed his personal condolences to the family of Mayor Eugene Sawyer and presented each with a parchment copy of the memorial resolution.

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Alderman Burke requested leave of the body to permit publication of written remarks in the *Journal of the Proceedings of the City Council of the City of Chicago*. Leave was granted.

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WRITTEN MESSAGE OF CONDOLENCE BY  
ALDERMAN EDWARD M. BURKE.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Chicago City Council.

History is a defining and efficient discipline. Without courtesy or compassion it is exacting and unrelenting, recalling and expanding the facts of human existence. As it unfolds it often uncovers the heart and poetry of human life. The American historian, David McCullough says -- History is a guide to navigation in perilous times. History is who we are and why we are the way we are. No Chicago official was more in touch with the drama of history and its ability to seize us when we least expect than the late Gene Sawyer. His life and leadership always at the service of Chicago bear witness to that opinion. He will be remembered as a transitional mayor of remarkable distinction.

Gene Sawyer's gentle ways and easy humanity belie the strength and courage of his character. He did not seek the high office of mayor, but when it was presented in a moment of great need by the majority of this legislative body, Gene Sawyer rose to the occasion. His actions remain historic, for they gave Chicago the stability and the confidence it needed to recover after the sudden passing of Harold Washington.

Gene Sawyer's character will always be connected to the actions of this Council, none more critical than in the longest meeting I suspect ever held during the hours of December 1 through December 2, 1987. In the debate and the compromise; in the caucus and deliberation that ensued, Gene Sawyer was attacked, threatened and vilified by some opposed to his election. But that minority did not prevail. And that fear did not engulf Gene Sawyer. Those of us who were present will never forget the turmoil and the challenge of that night. I remember seeking out Gene as he was trying to make his decision in his third floor office -- hoping that the cup would pass him by. I say that this morning without ever having spoken of it before. Gene asked us to pray with him and his pastor, Addie Wyatt; and we did. We prayed together for all that was yet to come. We prayed for courage; we prayed for acceptance; and we prayed for peace. Two decades later I think it is true to say that we received what we prayed for. In some ways the actions of that night reinforce something Emerson said -- All history becomes subjective; in other words there is properly no history, only biography.

Men like Gene Sawyer reinforce the significance of learning from each other's living -- the natural biography of everyday life. Here in this chamber; and in the office of mayor, Gene Sawyer wrote that lesson for us in large letters. He never did that more emphatically or courteously than at 4:02 A.M. on December 2, 1987 when he raised his right hand and swore. In becoming our city's 44<sup>th</sup> mayor, Gene Sawyer displayed a quiet and unexpected sense of courage and peace.

And throughout his time in office, Gene Sawyer displayed that quiet effectiveness that meant so much to Chicago.

His first words as mayor in the early morning hours of December 2, 1987 were strengthening and assuring "Chicago has lost one of its great sons and Black Chicago has lost one of its greatest leaders. Yet, the wave of progress ushered in by our late Mayor's two successive victories cannot be rolled back because of his death. Fate has made a different choice for our great city. I humbly accept your choice of me to guide our city and I promise you that I will continue the programs and policies of our late Mayor. I thank all of my colleagues who voted for me and extend my hand in friendship to those who did not support me".

This was the measure of a great man; a gentle man; a man of compromise and peace. Nothing else could have worked; nothing else was so desperately needed; and nothing else worked so well. Civility on both sides, John Fitzgerald Kennedy used to say, is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof.

Gene Sawyer was a proud Democrat -- and carried with him the honor and integrity of what that means here in Chicago. Gene knew that life is always larger than any of us as individuals. And that the life of this great metropolis stretches beyond the limits and limitations of each of us.

When history has forgotten many of us, it will recall with honor and acclaim the willingness of one man to conquer his fear and reach for peace in the early morning hours of that December two decades ago. History will acknowledge the critical decision of Gene Sawyer, the Alderman of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ward, whose willingness to sacrifice for others is a legacy for the ages.

The late Robert Kennedy once said -- All of us might wish at times we lived in a more tranquil world, but we don't. And if our times are difficult and perplexing, so are they challenging and filled with opportunity.

Gene Sawyer understood both politically and humanly that while we do not always choose the context of our decisions, he showed all of us how to act with the courage of our own character and hope that the mischief, trauma and uncertainty of life will be redeemed by the honor and the fortitude of a human act.

Eugene Sawyer saw this up-close and personal in the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and sought to make it real in his own living. Faith, Dr. King said, is taking the first step, even when you don't see the whole staircase.

Gene Sawyer brought honor to all Chicagoans by his gentle nobility. May God give him the reward of his gracious deeds.

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#### CLOSING MUSICAL SELECTION.

Ms. Felicia Coleman Evans performed the musical selection "If I Can Help Somebody".

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#### BENEDICTION.

Reverend Willie Taplin Barrow of Vernon Park Church of God delivered the benediction.

## PRESENCE OF VISITORS NOTED.

The Honorable Richard M. Daley, Mayor, called the City Council's attention to the presence of the following visitors:

family members of the late Honorable Eugene Sawyer: his wife, Mrs. Veronica Sawyer; his daughter, Ms. Sheryl McGill and husband, Mr. Winston McGill; his son, Mr. Roderick Sawyer and wife, Mrs. Cheryl Sawyer; his son, Mr. Shedrick Sawyer; his grandsons, Mr. Roderick Sawyer, Jr. and Mr. Sidney Sawyer; his granddaughter, Ms. Jessica Sawyer; his brother, Mr. Charles Sawyer and wife, Mrs. Mary Sawyer; his brother, Mr. John Sawyer and wife, Mrs. Barbara Sawyer; his brother, Mr. Ernest Sawyer and wife, Mrs. Theresa Sawyer; his sister, Ms. Shirley Sawyer; his cousin, Mr. Louis Mauldin and wife, Mrs. Grace Mauldin; Ms. Veronica Sawyers' brother, Richard Smith and wife Yolanda Smith; family members of Mrs. Sheryl McGill: brother-in-law, Mr. Matthew McGill; cousins, Dr. Joyce Kochers and Ms. Erma Nell Cannon; mother, Mrs. Celeste Taylor; aunt and uncle, Charles and Corrie Parks; and aunt, Ms. Melnee Johnson; and family friends: Mr. Joe Adams, Mr. Alex Jenkins, Mrs. Beverly Johnson, Mr. Bob Threatte, Steve and Margo Pugh, Dr. Arol Augsburg, Mr. Steven Edwards, Ms. Cynthia Cornelius, Ms. Louise Cornelius, Mr. Roscoe King, Ms. Vernice King, Reverend Leonard Barr, Ms. Michelle Jackson, Ms. Bernice Peterson, Ann and Jim Henton and Ms. Gigi Henton.

The Honorable Jesse Jackson, Jr., Congressman of the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District;

Mr. Roland Burris, former Illinois Comptroller and Illinois Attorney General.

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**Adjournment.**

Thereupon, Alderman Burke moved that the City Council do *Adjourn*. The motion *Prevailed* and the City Council *Stood Adjourned*.



MIGUEL DEL VALLE,  
City Clerk.

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