

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF REV. JESSE JACKSON, CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER

WHEREAS, Rev. Jesse Jackson, a towering civil rights icon who battled alongside Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., negotiated global hostage releases, and shamed corporations for their lack of corporate diversity and failure to support voting rights, passed away on February 17, 2026 at the age of 84; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson was born in Greenville, South Carolina in 1941 and attended a segregated high school; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson's rise to prominence began in 1960 at the age of 18 when he and seven other men were arrested for protesting segregation at their town's public library; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson, by 1965, had marched alongside Dr. King and others from Selma to Montgomery to push for Black voting rights, and by 1967, he was running operations for Dr. King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in Chicago, the city that would become his home; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson was only feet away from, and was speaking with, Dr. King when he was assassinated in 1968; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson guided the SCLC's Operation Breadbasket use of boycotts and public attention to pressure companies to hire more Black workers; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson earned his divinity degree after being ordained a minister in 1968; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson traveled to Syria in 1983 to negotiate the release of an American pilot shot down over Lebanon, and the next summer, he negotiated the release of 22 Americans and 26 political prisoners from Cuba after meeting with former dictator Fidel Castro; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson founded the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition and ran for president as a Democrat in 1984 and 1988, energizing and registering millions of Black voters; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson negotiated the release of hundreds of people who Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein had threatened to use as human shields, and then in 1999, he won the release of three U.S. POWs during the Kosovo War; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson preached a message that proclaimed the value of each person and the importance of equality and hope; and

WHEREAS, Rev. Jackson was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2000 by President Bill Clinton for his decades of work to make the world a better place.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Mayor and Council of the Township of North Brunswick, that even as we mourn the passing of Rev. Jesse Jackson and extend condolences to his family, friends, and all who knew and loved him, we honor his legacy and the values he espoused, including equality, justice, and the belief that every person deserves dignity and opportunity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Township of North Brunswick recognizes Rev. Jackson's lifelong commitment to civil rights, social justice, and civic engagement, and acknowledges the lasting impact of his leadership in advancing voting rights, economic opportunity, and human rights across the nation and around the world; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Township Council encourages residents to remember Rev. Jackson's enduring message of hope, unity, and service to others, and to continue striving toward a more just and inclusive society.