

1 State of Arkansas
2 95th General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2025

HMR 1003

4
5 By: Representative Springer
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8 HOUSE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

9 TO REMEMBER LEGENDARY CIVIL RIGHTS ATTORNEY AND
10 LONGTIME STATE REPRESENTATIVE JOHN W. WALKER, SR. FOR
11 HIS LIFELONG FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND HIS
12 SERVICE TO THE STATE OF ARKANSAS.
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15 Subtitle

16 TO REMEMBER LEGENDARY CIVIL RIGHTS
17 ATTORNEY AND LONGTIME STATE
18 REPRESENTATIVE JOHN W. WALKER, SR. FOR
19 HIS LIFELONG FIGHT AGAINST
20 DISCRIMINATION AND HIS SERVICE TO THE
21 STATE OF ARKANSAS.
22

23 WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. was born on June 3, 1937, in Hope,
24 Arkansas, and died October 28, 2019, at the age of eighty-two (82); and
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26 WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. was an attorney, a civil rights activist,
27 and a politician who served as a member of the House of Representatives from
28 January 2011 until his death in 2019; and
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30 WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. attended Henry C. Yerger High School in
31 Hope, one of the few schools in rural Arkansas that provided a high school
32 curriculum to Black children, before moving with his family to Houston,
33 Texas, in 1952 and graduating from all-Black Jack Yates High School in 1954;
34 and
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36 WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. was the first Black undergraduate student



1 admitted to the University of Texas after the United States Supreme Court's
2 decision in Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, but he still was not allowed
3 to attend because of his race; and
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5 WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. was also accepted to attend Howard
6 University in Washington, D.C.; and
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8 WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. attended the University of Arkansas at
9 Pine Bluff (then known as Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical, and Normal
10 College) for his undergraduate degree and New York University for his
11 master's degree, then obtained his Juris Doctorate at Yale University; and
12

13 WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr.'s first place of employment as an attorney
14 was with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's
15 Legal Defense Fund in New York City, where he remained associated as a
16 cooperating attorney and later as a member of the Board of Directors of the
17 National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Legal Defense
18 Fund; and
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20 WHEREAS, in 1965, John W. Walker, Sr. began his law practice in Little
21 Rock with an emphasis on civil rights, and in 1968 opened one (1) of the
22 first three (3) racially integrated law firms in the South; and
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24 WHEREAS, between 1965 and the time of his death, John W. Walker, Sr.
25 was personally involved in most of the reported cases involving racial
26 discrimination in the State of Arkansas, many of which created new law and
27 opened doors to all races in schools and places of work throughout the State
28 of Arkansas and surrounding states; and
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30 WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. was intimately involved with the legal
31 battle to desegregate the Little Rock School District begun by the late Wiley
32 A. Branton of Pine Bluff and future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall,
33 and Walker filed scores of successful lawsuits in federal courts to force
34 Arkansas school districts to integrate or provide coequal learning
35 environments; and
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1 WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr.'s early cases often involved classes of
2 people discriminated against by large corporations due to their race; and
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4 WHEREAS, by 1970, John W. Walker, Sr. had become famous statewide for
5 his nearly two (2) decades of prominent and tireless civil rights activism,
6 and was appointed to the Board of Education by then-Governor Winthrop P.
7 Rockefeller but was not confirmed to serve on the Board of Education; and
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9 WHEREAS, one of John W. Walker, Sr.'s latter cases was the only
10 nationwide racial discrimination case ever successfully brought against
11 Walmart, Inc., and involved Black truck drivers; and
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13 WHEREAS, John W. Walker, Sr. received numerous awards from bar
14 organizations including the American Civil Liberties Union, the National
15 Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Legal Defense Fund, and
16 the 2004 Southern Trial Lawyers Association's War Horse Award, and he was
17 inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame in 1999; and
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19 WHEREAS, upon his death, the body of John W. Walker, Sr. lay in state
20 in the rotunda of the State Capitol Building and his picture remains on the
21 wall of the House of Representatives' Quiet Room,
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23 NOW THEREFORE,

24 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL
25 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
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27 THAT the House of Representatives remember legendary civil rights
28 attorney and longtime State Representative John W. Walker, Sr. for his
29 lifelong fight against discrimination and his service to the State of
30 Arkansas.
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32 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT upon adoption, a copy of this resolution be
33 presented to the family of John W. Walker, Sr. by the Chief Clerk of the
34 House of Representatives.
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