



Ashanti Hamilton
City of Milwaukee Common Council

Inspired and emboldened by a true stateswoman, Vel Phillips

**Statement of Common Council President Ashanti Hamilton
April 18, 2018**

It is said that nothing good comes easy, that only through sacrifice and hard work do we achieve something positive, something special. Vel Phillips knew that and embraced it. And I believe Ms. Phillips showed us all that change can be achieved through quiet persistence and unwavering integrity.

Ms. Phillips was a trailblazer not just in the City of Milwaukee but also the State of Wisconsin and nationally. She is featured at the State of Wisconsin Historical Society Museum in Madison, and as we marked the 50 year anniversary of the Fair Housing Act we remembered her vigilance and her courage in fighting for the Milwaukee ordinance that would champion fair and open housing for ALL Milwaukeeans.

In 1962, she introduced an open housing ordinance but her vote was the only one in support of it. She introduced the ordinance **three** more times during the next five years but the result was always the same – a single vote from Ms. Phillips.

But on April 30, 1968 – a few weeks after President Lyndon Johnson signed the federal Fair Housing Act -- the Milwaukee Common Council passed its own fair housing ordinance that was more comprehensive than the federal act. Victory had arrived for the people, all because of Ms. Phillips' dogged determination, skill and courage.

Ms. Phillips would go on to serve as the first female judge in Milwaukee County and the first African American judge in Wisconsin.

In 1978, she once again made history when she became the first African American to be elected as secretary of state.

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Her trailblazing and role-modeling as a public servant has inspired many African Americans to fight for change in the civic arena and to seek careers in public service. I have been inspired by her, moved by her and I will work to ensure that her legacy lives on forever.

I send my sincere condolences to the family and friends of a true hero, The Honorable Vel Phillips.

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