

**BY:** M. of A. Heastie

**MOURNING** the death of the Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson and honoring his lifetime of service, leadership, and advocacy for civil rights and social justice

**WHEREAS,** From time to time, the Legislature of the State of New York pauses in its deliberations to recognize individuals whose lives have profoundly shaped society and whose leadership, courage, and moral conviction have left an enduring imprint on history, inspiring generations to confront inequality, expand opportunity, and work toward a more just and fair society; among the distinguished figures whose lives embody these ideals, few have demonstrated such enduring courage, moral clarity, and transformative impact as the Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson; and

**WHEREAS,** The Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson, born Jesse Louis Burns on October 8, 1941, in Greenville, South Carolina, rose from humble beginnings to become one of the most influential civil rights leaders in history, dedicating his life to the pursuit of justice, equality, and human rights for Black Americans and all people; and

**WHEREAS,** Reverend Jackson was raised in a segregated South, and was surrounded by a community that instilled in him a deep sense of faith, resilience, and responsibility; he went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts in sociology from the Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina, now known as North Carolina A&T State University; in 1964, he began his theological studies at Chicago Theological Seminary but deferred his studies when he began working full-time in the Civil Rights Movement with the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; he was ordained on June 30, 1968 by Reverend Clay Evans and received his Master of Divinity degree from Chicago Theological Seminary in 2000; and

**WHEREAS,** Reverend Jackson emerged as a mentee and follower of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the Civil Rights Movement, standing alongside Dr. King in the final moments of his life in 1968, and carrying forward the movement's moral and strategic legacy with unwavering commitment; and

**WHEREAS,** Reverend Jackson played a pivotal role in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Operation Breadbasket, transforming it into a national force for economic justice by negotiating employment opportunities, corporate accountability agreements, and community investment commitments that reshaped access to economic power for Black Americans; and

**WHEREAS,** Reverend Jackson strengthened the national movement for justice by founding the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, uniting his earlier organizations to advance political empowerment, economic opportunity, and equal rights for underserved communities; through the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, Reverend Jackson championed voter registration, educational

equity, fair housing, and criminal justice reform, mobilizing millions of Americans to participate in civic life and expanding the political influence of historically marginalized communities; and

**WHEREAS**, Reverend Jackson's groundbreaking 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns galvanized a multiracial "Rainbow Coalition," elevating issues such as universal healthcare, workers' rights, environmental justice, and international human rights, and opened doors for future candidates of color to seek and hold the highest offices in the nation; and

**WHEREAS**, Reverend Jackson distinguished himself as a global humanitarian and diplomat, negotiating the release of American hostages and political prisoners in Syria, Cuba, Iraq, and other regions, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to peace, dialogue, and the protection of human life; and

**WHEREAS**, Reverend Jackson was a tireless advocate for labor rights, standing with workers across industries ranging from farmworkers to airline employees to public sector unions, consistently affirming that economic justice is inseparable from civil rights; and

**WHEREAS**, Reverend Jackson's voice resonated across generations as he spoke out against apartheid in South Africa, voter suppression in the United States, and human rights abuses around the world, reinforcing the moral imperative of global solidarity in the struggle for freedom and equality; and

**WHEREAS**, Reverend Jackson's lifelong dedication to youth empowerment, leadership development, and educational opportunity inspired countless young people to pursue public service, activism, and community leadership, ensuring that his legacy continues to shape the future; and

**WHEREAS**, Reverend Jackson further distinguished himself through national public service, including his tenure as "shadow senator" for the District of Columbia from 1991 to 1997, where he advocated for full congressional representation and statehood for the residents of Washington, D.C.; and

**WHEREAS**, In recognition of his decades of leadership, moral courage, and unwavering commitment to civil and human rights, Reverend Jackson was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton in 2000, the nation's highest civilian honor; and

**WHEREAS**, Reverend Jackson maintained deep and enduring ties to New York State, shaping its civil rights landscape and launching the Wall Street Project in New York City, an initiative dedicated to challenging the financial industry to expand access and opportunity for minority entrepreneurs, investors, and professionals, and to ensure that the corporate sector reflected the diversity, talent, and economic aspirations of all communities; and

**WHEREAS**, Reverend Jackson's work in New York strengthened grassroots

organizing, expanded political participation, and inspired generations of New Yorkers to confront injustice with courage, discipline, and moral conviction; and

**WHEREAS**, Throughout his life, Reverend Jackson remained a steadfast voice against racism, poverty, violence, and discrimination, championing voting rights, workers' rights, educational equity, and the dignity of marginalized communities across the nation; and

**WHEREAS**, Reverend Jackson passed away on February 17, 2026, at the age of 84, leaving behind a monumental legacy of activism, institution building, and moral leadership that transformed the United States and inspired movements around the world; and

**WHEREAS**, Reverend Jackson is survived by his devoted wife of more than six decades, Jacqueline Lavinia Brown Jackson, and their children, Santita Jackson, Jesse Louis Jackson Jr., Jonathan Luther Jackson, Yusef DuBois Jackson, Jacqueline Lavinia Jackson, and Ashley Laverne Jackson, all of whom carry forward his legacy of service, faith, and commitment to justice; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to mourn the passing of the Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson, to honor his extraordinary life and achievements, and to recognize his profound contributions to civil rights, democracy, and human dignity; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of the Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson, with the deepest sympathy and gratitude of the people of New York State.