

Assembly Resolution No. 1506

BY: M. of A. Zinerman

HONORING the life and legacy of Thomas H. Watkins, Jr., a pioneering journalist, media entrepreneur, and champion for the economic and civic empowerment of the African-American community

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body honors those who have dedicated their lives to uplifting their communities, amplifying the voices of the underserved, and whose legacies continue to inspire generations long after their service has ended; and

WHEREAS, Thomas H. Watkins, Jr. was born in 1937 into a family with a proud tradition of advocacy for African-American rights-his grandfather argued before Congress for federal protections from lynching, and his father helped expand the circulation of the **Amsterdam News**, New York's oldest and first fully unionized Black newspaper; and

WHEREAS, Thomas H. Watkins, Jr. became a pioneering journalist and media entrepreneur, founding the **New York Daily Challenge**, the first Black daily newspaper in New York City, which at its height reached thousands of readers, generated nearly \$30 million annually, and employed dozens of African-Americans from its corporate headquarters in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn; and

WHEREAS, Over the course of his distinguished career, Thomas H. Watkins, Jr. expanded the reach of Black media by founding and acquiring publications including the **Afro Times**, **New American**, **Jersey City Challenge**, **Paterson-Passaic Challenge**, and **Newark Challenge**, consistently advocating for the economic independence of African-Americans and the enduring power of the Black voice and the Black dollar; and

WHEREAS, As president of the National Newspaper Publishing Association from 1989 to 1992, and as a devoted lifelong member thereafter, Thomas H. Watkins, Jr. used his platform to mentor, inspire, and uplift Black journalists nationwide, delivering keynote addresses for organizations such as United Way and at esteemed institutions, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) such as Bethune-Cookman University and Johnson C. Smith University; and

WHEREAS, A committed community leader, Thomas H. Watkins, Jr. was a proud member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, the Comus Club, and the Reveille Club; throughout his life in Brooklyn, New York, he remained steadfast in advocating for the financial empowerment of African-Americans and the advancement of his community; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of his extraordinary life and enduring impact on journalism, the African-American community, and the City and State of New York, it is fitting and proper that this Legislative Body pause to honor Thomas H. Watkins, Jr. and his lifelong dedication to

empowering others through media, education, and economic opportunity;
now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body hereby honors the life, legacy, and remarkable contributions of Thomas H. Watkins, Jr., who died on Friday, December 19, 2025, and expresses its profound gratitude for his tireless commitment to amplifying Black voices, fostering economic empowerment, and championing civic engagement; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Thomas H. Watkins, Jr.