



Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN

Legislation Text

File #: RS2020-653, **Version:** 1

A Resolution honoring the life of civil rights activist William E. Harbour.

WHEREAS, William E. Harbour was born on January 4, 1942 in Piedmont, Alabama; and

WHEREAS, Harbour dreamed of becoming the first person in his family to graduate from college, but faced a challenge when was rejected from Jacksonville State University for being black; and

WHEREAS, however, after a new job brought him to Nashville, he enrolled in what is now Tennessee State University in 1961; and

WHEREAS, Harbour soon became involved in student activism with the Student Central Committee of the Nashville Christian Leadership Council. During this time, he befriended activists including the late Congressman John Lewis and the late Rev. C.T. Vivian; and

WHEREAS, he became a Freedom Rider, part of a movement launched to test federal desegregation laws on buses. Freedom Riders, including Harbour, often were subject to violence during these protests; and

WHEREAS, Harbour and other TSU students were jailed during one such Freedom Ride in Mississippi. When they returned to the university, the students learned that they had been expelled; and

WHEREAS, Harbour and the other students sued the State of Tennessee in 1962 and were ultimately allowed to continue their education. In 2008, the Tennessee Board of Regents awarded Harbour and the other expelled students honorary doctorate degrees. The Atlanta Chapter of the TSU National Alumni Association now has a scholarship in Harbour's name; and

WHEREAS, during his time in Nashville, Harbour participated in other acts of civil disobedience around the city. Trained in nonviolent social resistance by the Rev. James Lawson, Harbour and others participated in sit-ins, stand-ins, picketing, and marching in Nashville and across the South. As a result, Harbour was arrested several times and was even imprisoned in a maximum-security prison; and

WHEREAS, Harbour graduated from TSU and obtained a masters degree at the University of Utah. He spent his later years in Atlanta teaching social studies and working as a management analyst for the United States Army Forces Command; and

WHEREAS, William E. Harbour passed away on August 27, 2020; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that the Metropolitan County Council honor the life of civil rights activist and Freedom Rider William E. Harbour for his contributions to Nashville.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. That the Metropolitan County Council hereby goes on record as honoring the life of civil rights activist William E. Harbour.

Section 2. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.