


CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

OAKLAND CITY COUNCIL

RESOLUTION NO. _____ C.M.S.

INTRODUCED BY COUNCILMEMBER CARROLL FIFE

**RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF
MCCLYMONDS ALUMNUS, WILLIAM “BILL” RUSSELL, ONE OF
THE GREATEST BASKETBALL PLAYERS IN THE HISTORY OF THE
GAME AND A FIERCE RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVIST;
AND DESIGNATING FEBRUARY 12TH AS BILL RUSSELL DAY IN THE
CITY OF OAKLAND**

WHEREAS, William Felton Russell was born in West Monroe, Louisiana on February 12, 1934, relocating with his family to Oakland, California when he was 8 years old; and

WHEREAS, Russell began his basketball career in Oakland, developing his skills at McClymonds High School under the guidance of Coach George Powles; and

WHEREAS, Russell would go on to attend the University of San Francisco, becoming a remarkable player and helping secure two National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) championships in 1955 and 1956; and

WHEREAS, in 1956, Russell was drafted to the National Basketball Association “NBA”, eventually landing with the Boston Celtics and that same year helping the United States Olympic basketball team win the gold medal at the Melbourne Games; and

WHEREAS, during his tenure with the Celtics he would go on to become a legend, leading the team to 11 championships in 13 years and being named Most Valuable Player 5 times; and

WHEREAS, in 1966 Russell made history when he became a player-coach, taking up the post of head coach for the Celtics, making him the first Black head coach in a major sports league in the country; and

WHEREAS, Bill Russell’s contributions extend far beyond basketball—he fought persistently for racial and social justice; and

WHEREAS, in 1961, Russell led a boycott of an exhibition game after a restaurant in Kentucky refused to serve some of the Black players from his team; and

WHEREAS, in 1963 Russell participated in the March on Washington and was present for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech; and

WHEREAS, he helped open an integrated basketball camp in Jackson, Mississippi after the murder of Civil Rights Activist, Medgar Evers; and

WHEREAS, Russell also spoke out against the Vietnam War and was supportive of Muhammad Ali when he refused the Vietnam War draft; and

WHEREAS, in 2011, President Barack Obama awarded Russell the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award in the nation; and

WHEREAS, on July 31, 2022 William Felton Russell peacefully transitioned at the age of 88 and we celebrate his extraordinary life and indelible impact; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: That the Oakland City Council honors and celebrates the life and legacy of William “Bill” Russell, a legendary basketball player and a fierce racial and social justice activist; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the City Council designates February 12th as “Bill Russell Day” in the City of Oakland.

IN COUNCIL, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA,

PASSED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES - FIFE, GALLO, KALB, KAPLAN, REID, TAYLOR, THAO AND
PRESIDENT FORTUNATO BAS

NOES –
ABSENT –
ABSTENTION –

ATTEST: _____

ASHA REED
City Clerk and Clerk of the Council of the
City of Oakland, California