

2020 -- H 8112

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

HOUSE RESOLUTION

EXTENDING DEEPEST SYMPATHY ON THE PASSING OF THE HONORABLE PAUL L.
GAINES, SR., THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN MAYOR IN NEW ENGLAND

Introduced By: Representatives Abney, Carson, Ranglin-Vassell, Williams, and Hull

Date Introduced: July 16, 2020

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, It is with utmost sadness that this House has learned of the passing of the
2 Honorable Paul L. Gaines, Sr., beloved husband of Jo Eva Johnson Gaines, and cherished father
3 of Jena Gaines, Patricia Gaines and her husband, Michael Dean, Paulajo Gaines and her husband,
4 the Honorable William White, Jr., and Paul Gaines, Jr. He was also the very proud grandfather of
5 Zachary Gaines Mays and Nicolas Gaines Mays; and

6 WHEREAS, Born in Newport, Mr. Gaines was a son of the late Pauline and Albert
7 Gaines, and the brother of the late Albert Jr., William, Robert, Margaret and Estelle. He attended
8 Newport's public schools and earned his Bachelor's degree in Education at Xavier University of
9 Louisiana; and

10 WHEREAS, From 1955 through 1957, Mr. Gaines served our country with honor with
11 the Second Armored Division of the United States Army in Europe. Upon discharge, he served in
12 the Army Reserves for four years, and in 1968, continued his education, earning a Master's
13 degree in Counseling from Bridgewater State College; and

14 WHEREAS, For almost a decade, Mr. Gaines taught social studies, health, and physical
15 education at Thompson Junior High School and later, taught history at Rogers High School where
16 he was also the assistant and ultimately the head basketball coach. In 1968, he became assistant
17 to the President for minority affairs and affirmative action at Bridgewater State College, retiring
18 in 1996 after a 37-year career in education; and

19 WHEREAS, Mr. Gaines began his long and illustrious association with politics in 1968,

1 when he was appointed to the Newport School Committee to fill an unexpired term. Appealing to
2 a broad political spectrum, he was subsequently elected to a full term and in 1977, he successfully
3 ran for the Newport City Council, becoming the first African American elected to the Council
4 since the turn of the century; and

5 WHEREAS, Earning the respect of his fellow councilors, Mr. Gaines was elected Chair
6 and Mayor of Newport in September of 1981, conferring him with the distinction of becoming the
7 first African American Mayor in New England; and

8 WHEREAS, Throughout his lifetime, Paul Gaines continuously recognized and
9 embraced his responsibility to give back. During his tenure as Chair of the Committee for the
10 Renovation of Patriots' Park in Portsmouth, he oversaw the construction of a monument for the
11 First Rhode Island Regiment ("the Black Regiment") that fought in the Revolutionary War. His
12 public service also included election to the Rhode Island Constitutional Convention, and serving
13 as a member of the Advisory Council of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the Rhode Island
14 Ethics Commission, the Board of Trustees of St. Michael's Country Day School, the Newport
15 Historical Society, the Newport Public Schools Equity in Education Committee, and the Newport
16 Canvassing Authority, where he was also named Chair, to name but a few of his many
17 commitments and endeavors; and

18 WHEREAS, For his devotion to the our State, various organizations bestowed Paul
19 Gaines was with a plethora of awards and honors. Upon his retirement from education, the Afro-
20 American Alumni Society established the Paul L. Gaines Scholarship. He was also inducted into
21 the Newport Sports Hall of Fame, delivered the keynote address at the 58th Annual Reading of
22 the George Washington Letter to the Congregation of Touro Synagogue in Newport, and received
23 the Living the Dream Award of the Martin Luther King Jr. State Holiday Commission; and

24 WHEREAS, Paul Gaines was a dedicated public official whose upright and noble life
25 was a standard of emulation for us all, and his social and political conscience transformed and
26 enriched the quality of life for many Rhode Islanders; now, therefore be it

27 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island hereby
28 extends its deepest condolences on the passing of the Honorable Paul L. Gaines, Sr.; and be it
29 further

30 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
31 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Mrs. Jo Eva Johnson Gaines and Family.

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