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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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# HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 359      Session of  
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INTRODUCED BY BISHOP, MANDERINO, THOMAS, PAYTON, OLIVER, WATERS,  
YOUNGBLOOD, PARKER, CRUZ AND SABATINA, JUNE 28, 2007

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INTRODUCED AS NONCONTROVERSIAL RESOLUTION UNDER RULE 35,  
JUNE 28, 2007

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A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing the many varied and significant contributions of  
2     WDAS-AM.

3     WHEREAS, In 1951, Doctor Max M. Leon and Bob Klein undertook  
4 a revolutionary endeavor, instituting one of the nation's first  
5 African-American radio stations, WDAS-AM of Philadelphia,  
6 Pennsylvania; and

7     WHEREAS, This industry-leading broadcast facility had a  
8 galvanizing social impact in this Commonwealth and, in fact,  
9 across this nation; and

10     WHEREAS, WDAS-AM was not just a radio station, it was a  
11 cultural institution bringing its listeners aspects of every  
12 known societal necessity from award-winning news coverage to the  
13 finest musical programming and governmental and religious  
14 affairs; and

15     WHEREAS, Thanks to the work of pioneering station WDAS-AM,  
16 there were many other such stations finally on the air, but none  
17 were ever more effective in standing for justice and encouraging

1 enlightenment here and across the nation; and

2 WHEREAS, The realities of Jim Crow America were still very  
3 much alive in 1951, including racially motivated murders of  
4 social progressives, segregated schools, housing, public  
5 transportation and drinking fountains; and

6 WHEREAS, This was the climate into which Dr. Leon and Mr.  
7 Klein, in their everyday actions, finessed, asked, implored and  
8 when necessary demanded that Philadelphia and white Americans  
9 respect the African-American community; and

10 WHEREAS, WDAS-AM was the only station to stand up for the  
11 rights of minority broadcasters, successfully suing Arbitron  
12 Industries, proving they were racist in their listenership  
13 accounting methods of America's minorities, and it paved the way  
14 for equality in the marketplace for all minority broadcasters  
15 and with the ensuing enhanced revenues proved to all of  
16 corporate America the vitality and economic strength of the  
17 African-American community; and

18 WHEREAS, By the mid 1950s, WDAS-AM had established one of the  
19 first and only full-service broadcast news departments providing  
20 major coverage of every groundbreaking civil rights breakthrough  
21 with firsthand reporting from Brown v. Board of Education of  
22 Topeka, Rosa Parks' refusal to take a back seat, the Montgomery  
23 bus boycott, the Little Rock, Arkansas, riots, the Birmingham  
24 church bombings, the integration of Alabama University, Dr.  
25 King's marches on Washington, DC and his winning the Nobel Peace  
26 Prize and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the  
27 Voting Rights Act of 1965; and

28 WHEREAS, WDAS-AM was responsible for bringing Dr. King to  
29 Philadelphia, sponsored a parade down Market Street in  
30 Philadelphia introducing Dr. King to the city, commissioned

1 buses taking Freedom Riders to the South and supplied buses to  
2 take people to all of Dr. King's marches; and

3 WHEREAS, The unprecedented and innovative programming efforts  
4 of WDAS-AM are credited with keeping Philadelphia calm in the  
5 wake of Dr. King's assassination, as a result of which  
6 Philadelphians mourned their loss in the nonviolent manner Dr.  
7 King always advocated; and

8 WHEREAS, In a letter written one year after Dr. King's  
9 assassination, King confidant and Ambassador Andrew Young said  
10 this about WDAS-AM:

11 For the past number of years WDAS and its manager Robert  
12 Klein have been of great service to Dr. King and the Southern  
13 Christian Leadership Conference. They have supported us  
14 editorially, financially, spiritually and with a great amount  
15 of their air time...To our knowledge there is no station in  
16 America that has worked harder, longer and with more dedication  
17 for Black people than WDAS in Philadelphia;

18 and

19 WHEREAS, WDAS-AM celebrated a resounding victory against  
20 racism when it supported and partnered with Cecil Moore, Esq.,  
21 in his victorious effort to integrate Girard College; and

22 WHEREAS, For many years WDAS-AM was instrumental in leading,  
23 supporting and encouraging the various consciousness-raising and  
24 financial boycotts to curtail United States business involvement  
25 in South Africa until that racist government ended its  
26 systematic human rights violations; and

27 WHEREAS, Years earlier, WDAS-AM was the spearhead when the  
28 Rev. Dr. Leon Sullivan launched his boycott against the  
29 Greyhound Bus Company in Philadelphia, successfully racially  
30 integrating the staff of drivers and personnel; and

1       WHEREAS, From Bright Hope Baptist to the Church of the  
2 Advocate and many smaller stops in between, the "overground"  
3 railroad forged by WDAS-AM performed major works of social  
4 progress in partnership with the leaders of every major church  
5 in Philadelphia and neighboring states; and

6       WHEREAS, WDAS-AM held numerous "radiothons" raising money to  
7 benefit churches and people in need; and

8       WHEREAS, One of the most famous of these marathon broadcasts  
9 was a gun surrender program, in which gang members and others  
10 brought in their weapons and pledged themselves to the  
11 principles of nonviolence; and

12       WHEREAS, WDAS-AM was responsible for the legendary Freedom  
13 Shows where the finest rhythm and blues talents in the world  
14 were brought into Philadelphia for the benefit of worthy civil  
15 rights and social organizations; and

16       WHEREAS, WDAS-AM was the home of one of the first African-  
17 American talk shows in the history of this country, the first in  
18 Philadelphia and probably the first on the East Coast: "The  
19 Listening Post," with Joe Rainey; and

20       WHEREAS, WDAS-AM charities raised and distributed hundreds of  
21 thousands of pre-1980 dollars to thousands of people in the  
22 tristate area, year after year; and

23       WHEREAS, WDAS-AM contributed to the enormous popularity of  
24 rhythm and blues music and helped elevate rhythm and blues  
25 artists at a time when African-American artists could not get  
26 their records played on white radio stations; at a time when  
27 African-American radio talent could not get hired at white  
28 stations; at a time when African-American artists were being  
29 paid as little as one-tenth of what white artists were making  
30 and at a time when African-American artists could not walk

1 through the lobbies of the clubs in which they were appearing;  
2 and

3 WHEREAS, WDAS-AM was the first station in the country to play  
4 records by Sam Cooke, Aretha Franklin, the Beatles, Marvin Gaye,  
5 Buddy Holly, The Jackson 5, Stevie Wonder and Will Smith; and

6 WHEREAS, WDAS-AM air personalities were instrumental in  
7 helping talent get to the right record company, most notably  
8 Louise Williams Bishop getting Aretha Franklin signed with  
9 Atlantic Records and Joe "Butterball" Tamburro helping Sister  
10 Sledge, along with numerous instances involving WDAS-AM  
11 legendary program director Jimmy Bishop; therefore be it

12 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives recognize WDAS-AM  
13 for its extraordinary cultural, spiritual and historic acts of  
14 bravery, standing for the causes of freedom and justice in  
15 helping secure the rights and pursuit of excellence for African  
16 Americans, which eventually led to the securing of rights for  
17 other minorities in our country, notably women, Native Americans  
18 and Hispanics, among others.