

1 Introduced by Council Member Freeman and Co-Sponsored by Council  
2 Members Amaro, Arias, Boylan, J. Carlucci, Carlucci, Carrico,  
3 Clark-Murray, Diamond, Gaffney, Jr., Gay, Howland, Johnson, Lahnen,  
4 Miller, Peluso, Pittman, Salem and White and amended on the Floor of  
5 Council:

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8 **RESOLUTION 2024-559-A**

9 A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE LIFE OF JOSEPH E.  
10 LEE, JACKSONVILLE'S FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN  
11 LAWYER, AND CELEBRATING THE OCCASION OF HIS 175<sup>TH</sup>  
12 BIRTHDAY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

13  
14 **WHEREAS**, Joseph E. Lee graduated from Howard University School  
15 of Law in 1873 and moved to Jacksonville to begin his practice shortly  
16 after; and

17 **WHEREAS**, Mr. Lee was elected to the Florida House of  
18 Representatives in 1874, where he served from 1875 to 1879, and to  
19 the State Senate, where he served from 1881 to 1882; and

20 **WHEREAS**, Joseph E. Lee was elected Municipal Judge of  
21 Jacksonville in 1888, the first African-American to have this honor,  
22 and served as the dean of the law department of Edward Waters College,  
23 which was founded in 1866 as an institute designed to educate freed  
24 former slaves, during this time; and

25 **WHEREAS**, as an influential figure in state and local politics,  
26 Mr. Lee attended the Republican National Conventions in 1880 and  
27 1884, was selected to be a delegate at the Florida Constitutional  
28 Convention in 1885, and presided over the Florida Republican  
29 Convention in 1920; and

30 **WHEREAS**, Joseph E. Lee had relationships with several US  
31 presidents, including President William McKinley, having been invited

1 to speak at the White House during President McKinley's term, and  
2 President Theodore Roosevelt, having been visited personally by  
3 President Roosevelt during a 1905 visit to Jacksonville; and

4 **WHEREAS**, an extensive collection of his professional and  
5 personal correspondence, which helps to paint a clearer picture of  
6 the man who holds the distinction of having been the City's first  
7 black lawyer and who left a legacy of commitment to public service  
8 and community, has been digitized and is stored by the Jacksonville  
9 Public Library; and

10 **WHEREAS**, September 15, 2024, marks the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of  
11 Joseph E. Lee's birth; now therefore

12 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of Jacksonville:

13 **Section 1.** The City Council hereby recognizes the life of  
14 Joseph E. Lee and celebrates the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, as  
15 his example as the first African-American lawyer in the City should  
16 continue to inspire both current and future generations to lead based  
17 on their convictions, no matter the color of their skin.

18 **Section 2. Effective Date.** This Resolution shall become  
19 effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective  
20 without the Mayor's signature.

21  
22 Form Approved:

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24           /s/ Mary E. Staffopoulos          

25 Office of General Counsel

26 Legislation Prepared By: Eamon Webb, City Council Research

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