

1 Introduced by Council Member Freeman:  
2  
3

4 **RESOLUTION 2024-559**

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

10 **WHEREAS**, Joseph E. Lee graduated from Howard University School  
11 of Law in 1873 and moved to Jacksonville to begin his practice shortly  
12 after; and

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

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

21 **WHEREAS**, as an influential figure in state and local politics,  
22 Mr. Lee attended the Republican National Conventions in 1880 and  
23 1884, was selected to be a delegate at the Florida Constitutional  
24 Convention in 1885, and presided over the Florida Republican  
25 Convention in 1920; and

26 **WHEREAS**, Joseph E. Lee had relationships with several US  
27 presidents, including President William McKinley, having been invited  
28 to speak at the White House during President McKinley's term, and  
29 President Theodore Roosevelt, having been visited personally by  
30 President Roosevelt during a 1905 visit to Jacksonville; and

31 **WHEREAS**, an extensive collection of his professional and

1 personal correspondence, which helps to paint a clearer picture of  
2 the man who holds the distinction of having been the City's first  
3 black lawyer and who left a legacy of commitment to public service  
4 and community, has been digitized and is stored by the Jacksonville  
5 Public Library; and

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

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

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

14 **Section 2. Effective Date.** This Resolution shall become  
15 effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective  
16 without the Mayor's signature.

17  
18 Form Approved:

19  
20           /s/ Shannon MacGillis          

21 Office of General Counsel

22 Legislation Prepared By: Eamon Webb, City Council Research

23 GC-#1638654-v1-Joseph\_E\_\_Lee\_Reso\_(Freeman).docx