



Arkansas House Newsletter

November 1, 2019

Mourning the loss of Rep. Walker



On Monday morning, House members were informed of the passing of one of our fellow representatives.

Representative John Walker was elected to the House in 2010 and was serving his 5th term when he passed at the age of 82.

He represented District 34 which includes southwest portions of Little Rock. His public service career stretched far beyond the halls of the Capitol.

Walker attended Yerger High School in Hope until 1952 and continued his education at Jack Yates High School in Houston, Texas, where he graduated in 1954.

He was the first African American undergraduate student admitted to the University of Texas after the Brown decision in 1954 but was not allowed to attend for racial reasons.

He went on to earn his bachelor's degree from Arkansas AM&N at Pine Bluff (now University of Arkansas Pine Bluff) in 1958 with a degree in sociology. Dr. Martin Luther King was the keynote speaker at his graduation.

Representative Walker earned his master's degree from New York University and in 1964, he received a law degree from Yale Law School.

He embarked on his public service as an attorney soon after. Walker's first work was as an attorney with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF) in New York. In 1965, he opened the first integrated law firm in Arkansas, where he consistently worked to provide equal educational opportunities. Between 1965 and now, Walker has personally been involved in most of the reported racial discrimination cases in the state.

In 2017, Rep. Walker sponsored legislation Act 566, An Act to Create the Helping Our People Excel (H.O.P.E.) Act of 2017 which allowed the state to opt out of federal prohibitions on public assistance for those with drug convictions.

A service for Rep. Walker was held in the rotunda of the Capitol on Thursday. During the service, House Speaker Matthew Shepherd gave these words,

"His sheer presence made our House stronger and our state better. Rep. Walker was one of those statesmen who spoke from experience rather than ego. He could vigorously oppose legislation in committee or on the floor, and immediately following adjournment would visit with those same members with whom he was in opposition to. He was also someone who encouraged others."

We mourn the loss of Rep. Walker and send our deepest condolences to his family and friends.