



Charleston County News Release

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Charleston County Election Headquarters Named for John L. Chisolm

Council renames election headquarters for Chisolm, commission member from 1974 to 2003

On Thursday, Oct. 28, [Charleston County Council](#) held a ceremony to official rename the County's Board of Elections and Voter Registration headquarters after the late John L. "Big John" Chisolm in front of an audience including Council members, past coworkers, friends and family members.

Chisolm, who passed away in 2004 at the age of 88, was recognized for being a former member of the Charleston County Election Commission and a civil rights pioneer.

"This is the least we could do to show our appreciation and support for his lifetime dedication to civil rights issues," said [Charleston County Council Chairman Teddie E. Pryor, Sr.](#) "He was an inspiration to all of us to fight for what we believe in and to work together for what we know is right. He made our community a better place for all of us."

Pryor spoke at the Oct. 28 ceremony along with U.S. Rep. James E. Clyburn, former Charleston County Voter Registration Director Mickey Miller and Chisolm's nephew, Leroy Chisolm. The invocation was given by the Reverend McKinley Washington, Jr.

County Council voted to name the voting facility the John L. Chisolm Election Headquarters during a regular meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 7. Chisolm spent many hours at the headquarters as a commission member from 1974 - 2003, devoting his passion to equal rights for all citizens of Charleston County for nearly 30 years.

Background on John L. Chisolm:

- Chisolm began his fight as a civil rights activist before the term became part of everyday language, fighting for his view of right and wrong.
- By the time the civil rights movement reached full swing in the 1960s, he was already a leader who had helped pave the way for sit-in demonstrations and other peaceful protests of the decade.
- He was once quoted as saying, "All I was trying to say to anyone who would hold folks back was don't walk in front of me and don't walk behind me. Walk beside me and be my friend."
- Also in the 1960s, Chisolm started a school transportation business that began with three children and blossomed to over 100, acting not only as their transportation but also as their mentor, friend and role model.
- In 1970, Charleston Mayor J. Palmer Gaillard appointed Chisolm as the city's first African American firemaster.
- Four years later he was appointed to the Charleston County Election Commission, a position he held until shortly before his death at the age of 88.
- After his appointment to the commission, major strides toward equality were made as he pushed tirelessly for voter registration by mail to allow more elderly and disabled voters to participate. He also boosted voter participation as a precinct chairman and through the state Democratic Party.
- Chisolm was founder of the Charleston Democratic Breakfast Club, a group that has held political forums on Monday mornings for more than 40 years.
- Chisolm was awarded the Order of the Palmetto, South Carolina's highest award for civil service, by former S.C. Gov. David Beasley.

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