



2007 SENATE RESOLUTION 13

February 27, 2008 – Introduced by Senators TAYLOR and COGGS. Referred to
Committee on Senate Organization.

1 **Relating to:** the life and public service of Lloyd A. Barbee.

2 Whereas, Lloyd A. Barbee was born on August 17, 1925, in Memphis,
3 Tennessee, and died on December 29, 2002, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and

4 Whereas, Lloyd A. Barbee was a tireless freedom fighter, civil rights leader and
5 attorney, Wisconsin state representative, professor, and true leader in the cause for
6 social justice as he lived by the philosophy that the only race is the human race; and

7 Whereas, according to the Wisconsin Lawyer Publication of the State Bar,
8 “Lloyd Barbee is probably the most important figure of the 20th century in Wisconsin
9 civil rights”; and

10 Whereas, he graduated from Booker T. Washington High School in Memphis,
11 served his country as a member of the U.S. Navy during World War II , and returned
12 to earn a degree in economics in 1949 from LeMoyne College in Memphis and a law
13 degree in 1956 from the University of Wisconsin–Madison; and

14 Whereas, he additionally taught at the University of Wisconsin Law School and
15 the Bronx Community College of the City University of New York; and

1 Whereas, Mr. Barbee founded the Milwaukee United School Integration
2 Committee (MUSIC) and, in 1965, filed a lawsuit in federal court on behalf of both
3 African-American children and white children from Milwaukee Public Schools who
4 were attending segregated schools which were subject to overcrowding and inferior
5 resources; and

6 Whereas, that lawsuit led to a 2-decade-long court battle and ultimately
7 resulted in the ruling that the Milwaukee Public Schools were unconstitutionally
8 segregated, prompting the Wisconsin legislature to enact a program of school
9 integration; and

10 Whereas, during the same period, Mr. Barbee was one of the first African
11 Americans to win state office when he was elected to the Wisconsin state assembly,
12 where he ultimately served for 6 consecutive terms from 1964 through 1976 before
13 retiring to focus his time completely on the schools case; and

14 Whereas, during his tenure in the legislature, Mr. Barbee quickly gained a
15 reputation for being an innovative and unconventional lawmaker willing to push for
16 social change even if there was little chance for political success, as he continually
17 attacked laws that he felt inhibited individuals, especially the poor and minority
18 group members, from achieving their full human potential; and

19 Whereas, while serving in the assembly and as the chair of the Judiciary
20 Committee he fought to expand personal freedoms by repealing restrictive laws on
21 what he called “victimless crimes” and was an advocate for open housing, ending job
22 discrimination, and providing better medical access for minorities and low-income
23 families, all issues that we are contending with yet in the present day; and

1 Whereas, from 1969 to 1973, he served as president of Freedom Through
2 Equality, a Milwaukee-based group established to reform laws detrimental to the
3 poor; and

4 Whereas, Mr. Barbee received numerous awards and honors, including the
5 American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin Eunice Z. Edgar Award for Lifetime
6 Civil Liberties Achievement and the Wisconsin Association of Minority Attorneys
7 Award for Inspirational Leadership and Outstanding Dedication; and

8 Whereas, in 1999, a Milwaukee street was renamed "Barbee Street" by former
9 Mayor John Norquist in Mr. Barbee's honor; and

10 Whereas, Mr. Barbee received an honorary doctoral degree in sociology from the
11 University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 2001; and

12 Whereas, the adoption of this senate resolution is supported not only by the
13 senate, but also by members of the assembly, including specifically Representatives
14 Sheridan, Schneider, Young, Grigsby, Sinicki, Mason, Fields, Benedict, Turner,
15 Kessler, and Hintz; now, therefore, be it

16 ***Resolved by the senate, That*** the Wisconsin senate honors the remarkable
17 life and achievements of Lloyd Barbee, both in the political sphere and in the various
18 communities in which he dedicated himself to improving the quality of life for all.

19 (END)