

HCR 31 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Rules

Prepared By: Leslie Porter, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 4/30

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure honors the life and legacy of Lyllye Reynolds-Parker, who lived from 1946 to 2024, and recognizes her outstanding contributions to the University of Oregon, the Eugene community, and the people of the State of Oregon.

Fiscal Impact: No impact

Revenue Impact: No impact

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Lyllye Reynolds-Parker was born on May 8, 1946, at Sacred Heart Medical Center in Eugene, Oregon, and she is believed to have been the first Black child born at the hospital. Her birth certificate was recorded as a white birth to protect her and her family from the Ku Klux Klan, which was active in Oregon at the time.

In the late 1940s, Lyllye Reynolds-Parker's family was displaced from Eugene's first Black neighborhood, near the Willamette River, when the Ferry Street Bridge was built, forcing them to relocate to an area near what is now West 11th Avenue, where their home lacked plumbing, running water, and electricity.

The Reynolds family is recognized as one of Eugene's founding Black families, and a historical marker was placed on West 11th Avenue in 2018 to commemorate Lyllye Reynolds-Parker's parents, Sam and Mattie Reynolds, who were cofounders of St. Mark Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, Eugene's oldest Black congregation.

In 1966, Mattie Reynolds became the first Black person to run for public office in Eugene when she sought a seat on the city council, an act that deeply inspired her daughter Lyllye to engage in civic life and fight for racial justice.

As a student at Sheldon High School in Eugene, Lyllye Reynolds-Parker was active in civil rights and social justice causes and was part of the school's first graduating class. When she was in the eighth grade, a school counselor told Lyllye Reynolds-Parker that her opportunities would be limited as a Black woman, discouraging her dream of becoming an attorney and instead suggesting a career in nursing, cosmetology, or home economics. She became involved in activism as a teenager, serving as vice president of the Eugene chapter of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and as a member of the Congress of Racial Equality, where she trained in nonviolent civil disobedience.

Lyllye Reynolds-Parker became a hairdresser before deciding at the age of 40, as a single mother of two, to enroll at the University of Oregon (UO), where she frequently mentored her much younger classmates. In 1991, she earned a bachelor's degree from UO in sociology with a minor in women's studies. Four years after graduating from UO, she began working as an academic advisor in the university's Office of Multicultural Academic Success, a position she described as being her passion and purpose.

Lyllye Reynolds-Parker served as a legendary student advisor at UO for 17 years, from 1995 to 2012, helping first-generation students of color navigate higher education, advocating for second and third chances with the

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Scholastic Review Committee, and fostering a sense of belonging within the UO community. She was a mentor and source of support for countless students, including many who faced personal challenges such as mental health struggles, helping them persist with their education. For so many students, the mentorship she provided lasted well beyond their time at UO.

In 2019, UO named the Lyllye Reynolds-Parker Black Cultural Center in her honor, making her the first Black woman and first living person to have a building named after her at the university. Of the 500 public comments submitted during the naming process for the cultural center, 84 percent advocated for naming the building after Lyllye Reynolds-Parker, reflecting her impact on students and the community. The UO Women's Center holds the annual Lyllye B. Parker Black, Indigenous, and Women of Color Speaker Series in her honor, ensuring that her commitment to uplifting women of color continues to inspire future generations.

In 2022, Lyllye Reynolds-Parker was honored with the Icon Award by the UO Black Alumni Network, recognizing her leadership and dedication to civil rights and education. In 2025, the UO Senate established the Lyllye Reynolds-Parker Award, recognizing professional staff and graduate employees who exemplified exceptional mentorship by creating a supportive, inclusive environment and encouraging students to reach their full potential.

Lyllye Reynolds-Parker served on the board of the League of United Latin American Citizens in Eugene, and she was the honorary chair of its Anti-Racial Profiling Committee.

Lyllye Reynolds-Parker's former students and community members came together to help her purchase her first home at the age of 75, raising more than \$76,000 to assist with the down payment in a tight housing market, a testament to the profound and lasting impact she had on those she mentored. She lived in her home with her sister, where they each had their own space after decades of service to others, and Lyllye planned to pass the home on to the next generation as a legacy for her son and granddaughter.

Lyllye Reynolds-Parker was a pillar of Eugene's movement for racial justice, working tirelessly to foster a more inclusive and equitable society. She passed away on August 22, 2024, and the void left by her death is immeasurable.

Lyllye Reynolds-Parker will continue to inspire generations to come with her words and example. As Lyllye Reynolds-Parker once said of the young people she felt so privileged to work with: "I just marvel at who they are and take pride in the fact that I was part of the team that paved the way for them." She will be forever remembered as a dedicated mentor, activist, and civil rights leader who touched countless lives and made her community a better place.