



Commonwealth of Kentucky

Kentucky Commission on Human Rights

Matthew G. Bevin, Governor

John J. Johnson, Executive Director

George W. Stinson, Chair

Press Release

Date: 11/2/2016

Media Contact: Victoria Stephens

Mrs. Stephens's direct phone: 502.641.0760

For help with discrimination, contact commission headquarters: 1.800.292.5566

Kentucky Commission on Human Rights mourns the loss of David O. Welch of Ashland

The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights and the nation have lost a beloved man who was part of our commission from its beginning, David O. Welch of Ashland, Ky.

He died on Sat., Oct. 29, and was 82-years old.

The former mayor of Ashland served the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights from its inception in 1960 and for 20 years and at different times as chair and vice-chair. He served as Ashland mayor from 1976 to 1980. He was an esteemed attorney and a great champion of human rights. As mayor, he helped create the Ashland Human Rights local commission.

In 1967, he chaired the commission's first public hearing supporting equal rights for minorities and women.

Commission Executive Director John J. Johnson became lifelong friends with Mr. Welch in 1967, when Johnson, a young leader of the Franklin, Ky., NAACP Chapter, asked the commission via one the commission's first discrimination complaints, to integrate the Franklin community swimming pool. Commissioner Welch was hearing officer in the case. With the help of Mr. Welch's former Berea College dormitory roommate who was first commission Executive Director Galen Martin (deceased) and the ruling of the commission, the pool was integrated. It was a milestone in the small western town of Franklin and in Kentucky.

Executive Director Johnson and the state human rights commission under Chair George W. Stinson presented a special award to Mr. Welch at Berea College in February 2010 during a 50-year anniversary event of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights.

The award said: "In recognition of David O. Welch, Kentucky's long distance runner for civil rights."

Among the many components of his legacy to the state-at-large, during his tenure as mayor, the City of Ashland saw for the first time appointments of African Americans as police officers and the hiring of women as firefighters.

Mr. Welch referred to the Ashland Human Rights local commission as "the conscience of the community."

Kentucky Human Rights Commissioner Carol Jackson of Ashland who also serves as president of the Ashland NAACP and has served on the Ashland Human Rights Commission, as well, said: "All of Ashland and I personally mourn the loss of this wonderful man. He was a true friend and a committed leader to equality. He was dedicated to serving others. We will greatly miss him."

Mr. Welch and Mr. Johnson have been serving the last years together on the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education Committee on Equal Opportunity. Mr. Johnson said, "David, himself, was considered a moral conscience of this invaluable committee."

Mr. Welch was inducted into the inaugural Kentucky Civil Rights Hall of Fame when it was established by the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights in 2000. The Hall of Fame has periodically inducted new members since that time.