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**CLERK DOROTHY BROWN REMEMBERS
JOHN H. STROGER, JR. AS FRIEND, MENTOR AND FATHER FIGURE**

As we celebrate Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday this month, I am honored to speak about another great pioneer who was my friend and father figure: former Cook County Board President Mr. John H. Stroger, Jr. Words cannot express the deep loss I feel in my heart by his passing.

My heartfelt condolences go out to his wife Yonnie, his son, Cook County Board President Todd Stroger, and his daughter Yonnie. No one is ever prepared for the loss of a loved one, and I hope they know that my prayers are with the family at this time.

John Stroger Jr. was a husband, father, political trailblazer, and he was a mentor and friend to many. Personally, he treated me like a daughter.

Because of his work in the Democratic Party in the early 50's and 60's, along with Congressman William Dawson, Ralph Metcalfe and Harold Washington, a political pathway was paved for many of us to follow into elected offices today.

A fellow southerner, John grew up knowing that he had to be the best if he was to succeed. And succeed he did. John was a legend who fought for healthcare, equal rights and equal opportunity for the poor and working class. He was the embodiment of justice, truth, honesty and the American Dream. As we celebrate Dr. King's birthday and anticipate African-American History Month, we must include John Stroger's legacy as a history maker. He was a great champion of the common person who lived his life in the service of humanity and brotherly love.

President Stroger enjoyed a long and prestigious career in government, having been appointed assistant auditor with the Municipal Court of Chicago, and personnel director for the Cook County Jail. While working for the financial director of the State of Illinois he earned a law degree from DePaul University and soon was elected 8th Ward Committeeman. After his election to the Cook County Board of Commissioners in 1970, Stroger went on to chair every major committee including finance, health, building and zoning.

As Commissioner, Stroger sponsored legislation aimed at assisting minority and female owned businesses. He also co-sponsored the county's Human Rights, Ethics, and Assault Weapons Ban Ordinances. In 1994, he was elected and became the first African American County Board President. As board president, he balanced the county's \$2.9 billion dollar budget, instituted a Juvenile Drug Court, appointed a Commission on Women's Issues and opened a new AIDS treatment and research facility. Dedicated to healthcare, Stroger served on the Chicago Metropolitan Healthcare Council and the board of South Shore Hospital. He was instrumental in

opening the closed Provident Hospital for the many Southside residents who would otherwise not have accessible healthcare. A major highlight of his life was when Cook County Hospital was named in his honor.

John Stroger was a man of integrity who believed in hard work. I am proud to be among those who had the opportunity to work with him and in many ways be mentored by him. I know if it had not been for John, who fought to breakdown racial and economic barriers, I and others would have had a more difficult time achieving elected offices in Chicago and Cook County.

I will always remember the life and legacy of John H. Stroger, Jr.

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