

Salt Lake County

A MEMORIAL PROCLAMATION OF THE SALT LAKE COUNTY COUNCIL HONORING THE LIFE OF FORMER SALT LAKE CITY MAYOR TED WILSON

WHEREAS, Ted Wilson was born May 18, 1939, in Salt Lake City to working-class parents. His mother was a hospital switchboard operator, his father owned a tent and awning shop, and he grew up steeped in Democratic politics, listening to FDR's fireside chats; and

WHEREAS, Ted was well educated, graduating from South High School in 1957, from the University of Utah with a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science in 1964, and a Master's Degree in Education from the University of Washington in 1969; and

WHEREAS, Ted received many scholarly awards including an honorary Doctorate of Laws from Westminster College of Salt Lake City, a fellowship from the John F. Kennedy Institute of Politics at Harvard University, and numerous education awards including Merit of Honor from the University of Utah Emeritus Alumni Board; and

WHEREAS, Ted also served in the Utah Army National Guard during the Berlin Crisis; and

WHEREAS, Ted was a consummate teacher, working as instructor at the Leysin American School in Switzerland, an Eagle, teaching economics at Skyline High School in Salt Lake City, and the founding member of several climbing schools; and

WHEREAS, Ted loved the outdoors and the mountains, especially Utah's Little Cottonwood Canyon, who worked as a park ranger and mountaineer in Grand Teton National Park. In the summer of 1967, Ted and six others heroically rescued another climber who had broken a leg scaling the north face of the Grand Teton. Ted also had extensive hiking experience in the Alps, Alaska, and the Andes; and

WHEREAS, Ted, always drawn to public service, served as Chief of Staff to U.S. Congressman Wayne Owens; and

WHEREAS, Ted also worked for Salt Lake County as the Director of Social Services in 1975, and had a deep commitment to and interest in mental health, mentoring then Assistant Director Karen Shepherd who took his place after his election; and

WHEREAS, Karen Shepherd also told a story about a river trip their families took together in which Karen's son Dylan got caught in the rapids of the river, and Ted leapt from his raft, crossed the river and an island to get ahead of Dylan, and leapt into the water to rescue him; and

WHEREAS, Ted served as Mayor of Salt Lake City from 1976 to 1985, during which time he presided over an election to change the at-large commission form of government to a council district form of government to increase the representation and responsiveness of Salt Lake City. Ted used to comment that because all of the commissioners lived within a block of each other, there was no representation for the rest of the city. These efforts brought enhanced transparency and accountability to Salt Lake City; and

WHEREAS, Ted's administration had many accomplishments, including the reconstruction of the Salt Lake City International Airport, expanding the green space in the city's parks, new efforts to preserve the Salt Lake City and County Building when it began to crumble, the construction of a new sewage treatment plant, the initiation and passage of the first historical and foothill preservation ordinances in the city's history (which helped to lay the groundwork for the Bonneville Shoreline Trail); and

WHEREAS, Ted's stewardship during difficult times is perhaps best remembered in how he provided leadership during the flooding of 1983, when a massive sandbagging operation was used to divert City Creek, turning State Street into a temporary river. It is no wonder Ted also served as the Executive Director of the Utah Rivers Council; and

WHEREAS, Ted was the Democratic nominee for US Senate in 1982, and was the Democratic nominee for Governor of Utah in 1988; and

WHEREAS, on July 1, 1985, Ted left the Mayor's office to become the Director of the Hinckley Institute of Politics at the University of Utah during a period of critical growth for that academic institution, leaving a legacy that will continue to impact generations of students. A gifted educator, he taught and inspired thousands of students in courses on American government, presidential politics, and the U.S. Constitution; and

WHEREAS, under Ted’s leadership, the Hinckley Institute expanded internship opportunities in Utah and Washington, D.C., increasing participation significantly, laying the groundwork for the Hinckley Global Internship Program, leading dozens of students on civic learning expeditions to India, prioritizing students and their development, securing academic scholarships, and founding the student-run Hinckley Journal of Politics; and

WHEREAS, Ted, upon retiring from the Hinckley Institute in September 2003, retained status as Professor Emeritus of political science and continued to teach classes at the university; and

WHEREAS, because Ted did not understand what the word “retirement” meant, he continued working in the areas he was passionate about, including serving as an environmental advisor to Gov. Gary Herbert and on the board of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance; and

WHEREAS, Ted’s greatest joy was adventuring with his five children, two stepchildren, and his thirteen grandchildren, and

WHEREAS, on April 11, 2024, Ted Wilson passed away at the age of 84; and

WHEREAS, Ted leaves behind a legacy of leadership in Utah, and at Salt Lake County and Salt Lake City, including through the continued service of his daughter, Salt Lake County Mayor Jenny Wilson; and

WHEREAS, the best tribute can be summed up by his family, who said, “As the eternal optimist, he loved people and they loved him back. We are honored that his memory will live on in the legacy he built as Salt Lake City Mayor, through the countless people he has taught and mentored, his decades of humanitarian service, and his mountaineering accomplishments. Ted’s lifetime priorities were his family and public service. He built and nurtured many deep and meaningful friendships and would remind us all to ‘never sweat the small stuff.’”

NOW THEREFORE, be it proclaimed by the Salt Lake County Council that the life and memory of former Salt Lake City Mayor Ted Wilson be honored and remembered by the government and residents of Salt Lake County; and

Be it further memorialized that the Salt Lake County Council encourages Salt Lake County government take all appropriate steps to honor Mayor Ted Wilson’s life, including flying flags at half-mast.

We would like to thank Mayor Ted Wilson’s family for generously sharing him with us these many years, and share our condolences with his loved ones.

SIGNED AND PROCLAIMED this 16th day of April, 2024.

Mayor Wilson

Council Member Winder Newton, Chair

Council Member Alvord, Vice Chair

Council Member Stringham

Council Member Harrison

Council Member Bradley

Council Member Bradshaw

Council Member Granato

Council Member Stewart

Council Member Theodore
