

**LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY
BOARD REPORT**

January 22, 2026

TO: Board of Library Commissioners

FROM: John F. Szabo, City Librarian

SUBJECT: **NAMING OF CENTRAL LIBRARY BOARD OF LIBRARY
COMMISSIONERS MEETING ROOM IN RECOGNITION OF LEONTYNE
BUTLER KING**

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Library Commissioners approve the following resolution:

RESOLVED, That the Board of Library Commissioners name the Central Library Board of Library Commissioners Meeting Room in recognition of Leontyne Butler King, the first African American appointed to the Board of Library Commissioners.

FINDINGS:

BACKGROUND

1. On June 26, 2025, the Board of Library Commissioners unanimously approved a recommendation to initiate the process for naming the Central Library Board of Library Commissioners Meeting Room in recognition of Leontyne Butler King. Following this approval, a public announcement of the solicitation and process was made, inviting the community to provide comments during a 90-day solicitation period.
2. The Board of Library Commissioners received a total of 17 comments, all in support of the naming of the Central Library Board of Library Commissioners Meeting Room in recognition of Leontyne Butler King. Of note, submissions were received from family members of Ms. King, a former colleague and members of the community.
 - "She worked to improve the lives of everyone around her. I've heard many, many stories of her, and keeping her legacy going would be amazing!"
– Dzree Posey (Great-Great Granddaughter of Ms. King)
 - "Ms. King's dedication to promoting freedom of expression and ensuring broad accessibility within the library has made a significant impact on our diverse communities. Her commitment fostered open dialogue and encouraged the use of all library resources to benefit everyone."
– Dr. Helena Johnson (Southern California Coalition of the National Council of Negro Women)

- “Please preserve history and educated Angelenos by commemorating the contributions of Leontyne King.”
– Jan Perry, former City Councilmember
 - “What sets King apart is her unwavering commitment to justice and access. She didn’t simply occupy a seat—she leveraged her position to expand library services in underserved, predominantly African American neighborhoods...For Black Angelenos and Americans nationwide, this recognition affirms that our contributions to civic life are seen, valued, and memorialized. It reminds emerging leaders—especially young Black women—that their voices belong in every boardroom, and that barriers are meant to be broken.”
– Dr. Gregory Thomas
 - “It would be fitting to name the Meeting Room in honor of Leontyne Butler King.”
– Dr. Tyree Wieder, former President of the Board of Library Commissioners
 - “She overcame insurmountable odds to achieve this position when African American women were scarce in the workplace. It is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit, and must be given the recognition and honor she deserves.”
– Raymond Parker
 - “I am the Grand Daughter of Leontyne Butler King. I submit these words with Thanks, Respect & Love.”
– Teri King
 - “I am on board with the new proposal. Her granddaughter, Teri King, was like a mom to me, and she spoke a lot about how her Grandmother, Leontyne Butler King, inspired her.”
– Donna Perdomo
 - “I support the effort to rename the Board Room at Central Library in honor of Leontyne Butler King.”
– Diane Kanner, former Commissioner of the Cultural Heritage Commission
3. Ms. King was born Leontyne Butler on July 4, 1905, in New Orleans and married Celestus “Celes” King Jr. in Chicago. The couple moved to Los Angeles with their son Celestus King III in the late 1930s and settled in South Los Angeles where Ms. King coordinated fundraisers for community churches and clubs. Known for her exceptional style, she also produced charity fashion shows. Her impeccable fashion sense earned her frequent recognition in publications like *The California Eagle* and *Jet magazine*, which often named her one of the city’s Best Dressed Women. Her profile and fashion influence were further cemented by a four-page feature in the January 1953 issue of *Ebony Magazine*.
4. Ms. King was appointed to the Board of Library Commissioners by Mayor Sam Yorty in August 1961 and made history as the first African American to serve on the Board. The minutes from that Board meeting note, “Commissioner Leontyne B. King was welcomed, and seated as a new member of the Board, replacing

Commissioner Dolores Hope, who had resigned. Commissioner King had been confirmed by the City Council and had taken the Oath of Office on August 17, 1961.”

5. Beyond her work with the Los Angeles Public Library, Ms. King's commitment to public libraries extended nationwide. In 1969, she was appointed to the American Library Trustees Association Board of Directors, where she championed public libraries across six states: Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. She also actively supported libraries nationwide through her involvement with the American Library Association and the California Library Association.
6. On January 26, 1976, the Board of Library Commissioners adjourned their meeting in reverence to Ms. Leontyne Butler King. The meeting minutes note the following motion: "There being no further business to come before the Board it was MOVED by Commissioner Holloman that the Board of Library Commissioners respectfully adjourn its meeting in tribute and respect to Mrs. Leontyne B. King, former Library Commissioner for 12 years and to whom the City and Library owe a great deal. Mrs. King passed away on Friday, January 23, 1976. SECONDED by Commissioner Vitale and unanimously carried."
7. The criteria and procedure for recognition in branch facilities is stated in Board Policy 1:312.
To acknowledge citizen involvement and contributions to branch libraries, the Board of Library Commissioners may recognize individuals or organizations that have made substantial efforts or donations to enhance and improve library services in the Los Angeles Public Library:
 - A. *for the dedication of a branch library may be accepted and processed in accordance with the following requirements:*
 1. *A written recommendation must be submitted to the Board of Library Commissioners to include a justification for the proposed dedication.*
 2. *The justification shall include the person's prominent contributions to humanity, to the city, to the library, or to the community, and should demonstrate that the character and achievements of the individual set standards of excellence, served as a role model, and reflected the principles and ideals of American democracy, its diversity and plurality.*
 3. *The recommendation shall be posted in the libraries and on the library Website for three months for review and the opportunity for comments by the public.*

4. Library staff will evaluate the recommendation and community input in a report to the Board of Library Commissioners for its consideration of the request.

B. The Board of Library Commissioners may name a community meeting room or area of the branch in honor or in memory of an individual, and approve the design and the placement of a plaque with the individual's name. Recommendations for naming a community meeting room or area of the library may be accepted and processed in accordance with the procedures in 1:312 A above.

8. The City Librarian recommends naming the Central Library Board of Library Commissioners Meeting Room in recognition of Leontyne Butler King.

Prepared by: John F. Szabo, City Librarian

LIBRARY RESOLUTION NO. 2026-X

WHEREAS, The contributions of former Library Commissioner Leontyne Butler King remain an enduring part of the Los Angeles Public Library's history.

WHEREAS, Ms. King was appointed to the Board of Library Commissioners by Mayor Sam Yorty in August 1961 and made history as the first African American to serve on the Board; and

WHEREAS, Ms. King's dedication to public libraries transcended her service to the Los Angeles Public Library, achieving a national scope. She was appointed to the American Library Trustees Association Board of Directors in 1969, where she became a vital advocate for public libraries across six states: Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Furthermore, her active participation in both the American Library Association and the California Library Association demonstrated her commitment to supporting libraries nationwide; and

WHEREAS, On January 26, 1976, the Board of Library Commissioners adjourned their meeting in tribute and respect to Ms. Leontyne Butler King; and

WHEREAS, On June 26, 2025 the Board of Library Commissioners initiated, in accordance with Board policy 1:312, the process to consider naming the Central Library Board of Library Commissioners Meeting Room in recognition of Leontyne Butler King; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Library Commissioners received a total of 17 comments, all in support of the naming of the Central Library Board of Library Commissioners Meeting Room in recognition of Leontyne Butler King. Of note, submissions were received from family members of Ms. King, a former colleague and members of the community.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Library Commissioners name the Central Library Board of Library Commissioners Meeting Room in recognition of Leontyne Butler King, the first African American appointed to the Board of Library Commissioners.

This is a true copy:

Lynda Achi
Commission Executive Assistant

Adopted by the following votes:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT: