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## Remembering Congressman Louis Stokes

With heavy hearts, the members and staff of the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association offer our condolences to the family of Congressman Louis Stokes, and express our deep sadness at his passing. A long-time friend, mentor, CMBA member, advocate for Cleveland, pioneer in the profession and leader in the community, Congressman Stokes has left behind a tremendous legacy for the legal and at-large community.

A Clevelander through and through, Congressman Stokes rose from humble beginnings to a life defined by profound greatness. He was the exemplar of professionalism, kindness, service, success, dedication and volunteerism.

Upon learning of his passing, Anne Owings Ford, president of the CMBA, reflected:

“I will always remember Congressman Stokes as a friend, a mentor and an inspiration. All who knew him and the many whose lives his generous spirit touched are suffering today. He performed remarkable services for our community, our state and our nation, but Congressman Stokes always was humble and approachable. He gave selflessly of his time and talents to support our public service and education programs, as well as many others in our community. On behalf of our nearly 6,000 members and the Greater Cleveland legal community, I grieve with his family at the loss of this great man.”

“We at the CMBA have been honored over the years to work closely with Congressman Stokes on many service programs, including our award-winning The 3Rs - Rights, Responsibilities and Realities program, which Congressman Stokes helped launch in 2006, and actively supported through this, its 10th year. He was the gracious and deeply involved namesake for our much-honored Louis Stokes Scholars program, launched in 2012, for college students who were graduates of Cleveland and East Cleveland schools and who were interested in the law. Congressman Stokes' powerful message to these vibrant, bright, engaged students was simple: *You are enough. You can be anything you want to be. I know; I did it.*”

“Through the CMBA and down through the years, thousands of students and graduates of the Cleveland Metropolitan School Districts have met and been inspired by Louis Stokes, one of their own and one of Cleveland's best.”

An honorary member of the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association, by virtue of his more than six decades as an attorney, Congressman Stokes was a member of both predecessor organizations, the Cleveland Bar and Cuyahoga County Bar, to which he gave tremendous

personal involvement and charitable contributions. Congressman Stokes' community engagement was broad and deep, extending to roles on the board of The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland as an honorary member of The City Club of Cleveland.

Congressman Stokes served as the honorary chair for the CMBA's annual National Law Day programs, put on with the City Club of Cleveland. He was instrumental in bringing such vitally important figures as Congressman John Lewis and Julian Bond, of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, who came to Cleveland in 2004 to discuss the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

Congressman Stokes spoke for the CMBA, the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Foundation, and the community programs offered through the CMBA during his many years of service. His involvement with The 3Rs program helped secure a successful launch and rallied volunteers to support and join the program, which now is entering its 10<sup>th</sup> year. He also participated in video Constitutional lessons to supplement curriculum and to provide lessons to those whose classrooms could not be covered by volunteers. Congressman Stokes has changed the life of every student he has encountered.

Congressman Stokes was proud of his urban Cleveland heritage, and always encouraged current Cleveland students to be proud, too. In 2006, while helping to launch The 3Rs Program, he remarked:

“I've stood on podiums on this public square for all kinds of causes. I have stood on podiums on public square here with candidates for the presidency of the United States. I've stood here with presidents of the United States. I've stood here with civil rights leaders for civil rights. I've stood here with women fighting for women's rights. I've stood here for all kinds of causes. This is the first day in my career I've been asked to stand on a podium on Public Square on behalf of students in the Cleveland public system. First time. Thank you. First time. And it makes me so proud...”

The CMBA and the greater Cleveland community lost a champion this week, but we are determined to honor his legacy of strength, grace and action.

“As we remember the immeasurable impact Congressman Stokes left on so many of our lives, we are profoundly grateful for his leadership and dedication. It is difficult to recall, in recent memory, someone as noteworthy as Congressman Stokes who has had such a lasting legacy on his hometown, the legal community, and Cleveland's students,” said Rebecca Ruppert McMahan, executive director of the CMBA.

McMahan added, “While his loss is tremendous, his legacy remains bright. We are forever indebted to Congressman Stokes' devotion to our community, the example he set by the life he lived, and the countless contributions he made to and for the legal profession.”