**Civil Rights Leader Vel Phillips Recalls a Lifetime of Service in DREAM BIG DREAMS**

A new documentary film from Wisconsin Public Television (WPT) titled Vel Phillips: Dream Big Dreams tells the history of civil rights leader Vel Phillips — Wisconsin's first African American woman elected Wisconsin Secretary of State. The documentary aired Feb. 16th on WPT and on Milwaukee Public Television. The full documentary is available online now at wpt.org/velphillips.

The hour-long documentary film is the first of its kind to chronicle Phillips' life and career using archival film footage and contemporary interviews with Phillips and family and friends, including Hall of Fame baseball player Henry "Hank" Aaron. The film also features interviews with Vel Phillips' son Michael Phillips, former Gov. Patrick Lucey, former members of the Milwaukee Commandos and professor Patrick D. Jones, author of "Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee." The documentary explores the many ways Phillips strived to build a better community in Milwaukee and throughout Wisconsin.

Beginning with her upbringing, Vel Phillips: Dream Big Dreams shows how Phillips achieved several firsts throughout her life, rising to prominence as one of Wisconsin's great civil rights leaders and later becoming Wisconsin Secretary of State, making her the nation's first African American woman elected to executive state office. In her own words and the words of others, the film documents the many challenges Phillips faced as the first African American and first female alderman on Milwaukee's Common Council and highlights Phillips lengthy struggle to pass Open Housing legislation in Milwaukee in the 1960s — a time in which Phillips joined Father James Groppi in protest marches throughout Milwaukee.

By weaving together Phillips' personal and professional narratives, the film also illustrates how her husband Dale played a major supporting role throughout her political career. The couple graduated from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1951 and opened their own law firm. Dale continued to support Phillips' political career as a strategist, advisor and devoted father to the couple's two children.

More than just a documentary, Vel Phillips: Dream Big Dreams is a statewide engagement project that will bring communities together for conversations about equity and race relations in the 21st century. Learn more and find events at wpt.org/VelPhillips Vel Phillips: Dream Big Dreams, narrated by Emmy Award-winning actress S.Epatha Merkerson ("Law & Order"), is the first WPT documentary from producer/director Robert Trondson. WPT production director Kathy Bissen and WPT program director Garry Denny are executive producers of the film. Additional interviews shot for the film include University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee professor Genevieve McBride, former Milwaukee Journal writer Greg Stanford, former Milwaukee Sentinel writer Dan Patinos, former Capital Times writer Bill Hauda, African American community leader Reuben Harpole Jr., friends Leonard and Ruth Zubrensky, NAACP Youth Council member Margaret "Peggy" Rozga, Milwaukee Commando Prentice McKinney, and niece Shaune Curry.

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