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From the San Diego Black Review, May, 1974

Leon L. Williams Deputy Mayor of San Diego.

In an historic action last month, the City Council appointed Fourth District Councilman Leon L. Williams as Deputy Mayor for 1974.

Councilman Williams, the first Black to serve on San Diego's Council, thus became the first Black to win the coveted post of Deputy Mayor.

Under the City Charter, the Deputy Mayor is required to act for the Mayor when the Mayor is absent or unable to carry out his duties. He also is the administrative head of the City Council Office, and represents the full Council at community meetings and special events.

In accepting the appointment, Councilman Williams told his colleagues that he was deeply honored by their action, and that all the citizens of San Diego —of every racial and ethnic background—should recognize the strides San Diego has made in human relations in a very short period of time.

The Councilman noted that few people thought in early 1969 that the City Council would appoint a black person to fill a vacancy of the City Council, but he was appointed.

"Later that year, few people thought the voters of the entire city would ratify that action by election of a black person to the Council, but I was elected," he said.

"Although few people had, in subsequent years, any real doubts that the Council would eventually select a Black Deputy Mayor, your decision should be regarded as another major step in our Council's efforts to bring about racial harmony in San Diego."

Councilman Williams pledged that during his term as Deputy Mayor he will actively seek means of improving communication between citizens and their elected officials.

One program announced by Mr. Williams involves scheduling of a series of informal meetings of the Council in each of the eight Council districts.

The Council would meet with participating citizens and then hear questions and comments on matters of community concern.

Additionally, Councilman Williams said, there appears to be significant support on the Council for establishment of branch city offices in the various districts.

Councilman Williams, who opened an outreach office in Southeast San Diego recently with the assistance of his wife, Martha, also said he will ask the Council to adopt a formal program for such offices to make it easier for citizens to bring their problems to the attention of City officials.

Long active in community affairs, Councilman Williams was appointed to the Council in January, 1969, from a field of 31 residents of the district who sought the job. He won the right to continue in the office in the November 1969 general election, and was re-elected in 1971.

At the time of his appointment, Mr. Williams was project director for the Neighborhood Youth Corps, a program he helped initiate, and was acting executive director of the Urban League of San Diego.

He earlier served as a supervising social worker for the County Welfare Department and as principal administrative assistant to the County Sheriff.

A native of Oklahoma, Councilman Williams grew up in California. He is a graduate of San Diego State University, with a degree in psychology, and presently is involved in graduate studies at United Stated International University.

Councilman Williams has been active in the Boy Scouts, Southeast YMCA, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Urban League, Community Welfare Council, and National Council of Christians and Jews.

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