

# **KAREN FREEMAN-WILSON**

Karen Freeman-Wilson has been the Mayor of her hometown of Gary, Indiana since January 2012, becoming the first female to lead the city of Gary and the first African-American female mayor in the state of Indiana. Freeman-Wilson has served in the public and/or non-profit sector most of her professional life having previously held posts as the Indiana Attorney General, the Director of the Indiana Civil Rights Commission and the presiding judge of the Gary City Court. She is also a leader in the national drug court movement and served as the Chief Executive Officer of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals and Executive Director of the National Drug Court Institute. Freeman-Wilson is a licensed attorney having engaged in private practice for 25 years with a focus in municipal finance, government relations and criminal law. Upon completing her second term as Mayor, Freeman-Wilson will join the Urban League of Chicago as the Chief Executive Officer.

Freeman-Wilson quickly attributes the signs of progress in Gary to the efforts of “Team Gary,” a group that includes city staff; other members of federal, state and local government; and those in the corporate, educational and non-profit arenas who have embraced her effort to rebuild the city of Gary. Accomplishments under Freeman-Wilson’s tenure include millions of dollars in infrastructure improvements at the Gary/Chicago International Airport and throughout the city; an early partnership with the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago and other universities; the creation of Art House: A Social Kitchen, a work of public art and culinary incubator supported through funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Knight Foundation; and the development of key neighborhoods in the city including the Miller Beach, Emerson, University Park and Downtown. She has cited increased philanthropic investments, improved police community trust, innovative housing projects, improved federal and state compliance, the strategic use of data and deepened civic engagement as hallmarks of her administration.

Freeman-Wilson is a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School. She is the President of the National League of Cities where she previously co-chaired the bi-partisan 2016 Presidential Task Force and the Public Safety and Crime Prevention Committee. Freeman-Wilson has represented NLC in China and Spain and has presented extensively on Infrastructure, Housing, Addiction and Treatment, Municipal Finance and Race and Equity on the organization’s behalf. She also previously chaired the Criminal and Social Justice Committee of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and led the group that authored the USCM’s publication on building police and community trust. She has joined other mayors in opposing punitive federal immigration practices and championing the United States’ continued participation in the Paris Climate Accord.

Freeman-Wilson serves on the Board of Directors for the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission, the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, the Urban League of Northwest Indiana and the Northern Indiana Chapter of the Links, Inc. She is also a member of Israel C.M.E. Church, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and the NAACP. Freeman-Wilson has been honored by individuals and organizations throughout the United States, including the United States Office of Drug Control Policy, Governors of Indiana, the Indianapolis Recorder, the Chicago Crusader, the California Senate, Indiana Black Expo, and the Gary Frontiers. She has also been featured in numerous publications including the Chicago Magazine, Ebony, Essence, Governing and Real Simple.

Freeman-Wilson and her husband Carmen Wilson have a blended family that includes four adult children.