

Archon Eddie Williams was a brilliant and special leader, who inspired and taught us to become the best of ourselves in all ways. Over the years, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies built a legacy of success by contributing high quality research on social and economic issues that provided the impetus for elected officials to craft critical policy solutions, and provided leadership in new approaches that impacted issues affecting African Americans and other people of color. For 32 years, under the leadership of Archon Eddie Williams, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies sought to expand its focus beyond political training and into the world of policy research, ideas and debate. Williams himself defined the organization's aim as follows: 'To identify public policy issues that have implications for Black Americans...to be both a center for intellectual discovery and a wellspring of practical knowledge.' I first knew of Eddie when I was a teenager growing up in Orangeburg, South Carolina. A couple of years after Eddie Williams took the helm of the Joint Center, my daddy and two other men broke the political color barrier in our community with their election to the Orangeburg County Council. Following his election, my daddy talked about how Eddie Williams and the Joint Center were assisting him and other new office holders as they sought to transform their new political power into a better life for African Americans everywhere. Eddie Williams was the longest-serving president of the Joint Center — 32 years, from 1972 to 2004. When I became president of the Joint Center in 2013, I took pains to assure Eddie at every annual dinner – and Eddie was always there – "Don't worry. I'm not going to break your record." I stayed for seven years. Eddie's impact continues to be evident forty years later. African Americans are influential in Congress, state houses and local governments across the country. Businesses and civic organizations are showing new resolve in confronting many of the entrenched social problems that have blocked our fellow citizens from pursuing the American Dream. The Joint Center is responding to seismic shifts in the way the world works – adapting, innovating, but always within the context of our knowledge and critical thinking that will shape the solutions leading to real world impacts. Eddie Williams set all of this in motion, and his leadership will have a lasting impact. We will miss him.

– Archon Ralph Everett, Epsilon Boulé, Past President, The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies