



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: President Young, Councilmember Welch

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Baltimore City Celebration of Negro Baseball League Day

FOR the purpose of joining in the annual celebration of Negro Baseball League Day on the second Saturday of May in recognition of the talent of the great players of the Negro Baseball League who, for the love of the sport, persevered to play professional baseball in a league of their own while consistently denied entrance to Major League Baseball.

Recitals

In a Concurrent Resolution designating May 20, 2006, as “Negro Leagues Recognition Day”, the 109th U.S. Congress recognized that, even though African Americans were excluded from playing in the major leagues of their time with their white counterparts, the desire of many African Americans could not be repressed, and they began organizing their own professional teams in 1885.

The Resolution states further that, although the skills and abilities of Negro League players eventually made Major League Baseball realize the need to integrate the sport fully in July 1959, African Americans organized six separate baseball leagues known collectively as the Negro Baseball Leagues between 1920 and 1960, where talented players played the game at its highest level.

Maryland was an integral part of the Negro Baseball League, playing host to a number of professional African American teams, including the Snow Hill Nine, the Pocomoke City Giants, the Denton Blue Sox, and the Crisfield Giants of the Colored Baseball League of the Eastern Shore, the Mitchellville Tigers, the Rockville Acs, the Yokely All-Stars, the Washington Black Sox, and the state’s two most prominent teams, the Baltimore Black Sox and the Baltimore Elite Giants. In the 2009 session, the Maryland General Assembly proclaimed annually the second Saturday in May as Negro Baseball League Day.

Baltimore City has a long-standing appreciation of the Negro Leagues, claiming as its own Leon Day (October 30, 1916 - March 14, 1995) whose family moved to Baltimore in 1917, when he was 6 months old. Raised and schooled in Baltimore, he left Frederick Douglass High to begin his pitching career with the Baltimore Black Sox. In 11 seasons, he compiled a 67-29 record and helped his club earn a spot in the 1937 Negro League World

Series.

While serving in WWII, Day and his fellow All-Stars, a mismatch of Minor League, Negro League, and semi-pro players won the ETO World Series before a crowd of 50,000 at Nuremberg Stadium in Germany. Upon his return to the states, Day joined the Newark Eagles where his amazing speedball garnered a 14-4 record, and he led the league in strikeouts, innings pitched, and shutouts, as his team cruised to the Negro National League title.

Six days before his death in 1995, Leon Day was elected to the Hall of Fame. Predating both federal and state legislation, in 1997, the City Council, the Administration, and the Friends of Leon Day & the Negro Leagues joined in renaming Bloomingdale Oval Park, in West Baltimore, the Leon Day Park. In appreciation of his dedication to the neighborhood children, he taught the finer aspects of pitching, and an annual Leon Day Festival, replete with parade, is held to celebrate the Negro Leagues and the nearly 500 kids who play on the football, baseball, and basketball teams sponsored by the Leon Day Foundation.

Baltimore's appreciation and admiration of Negro League Baseball is also reflected in a permanent exhibition in the Babe Ruth Birthplace and Museum. Negro Leagues: A Baseball Legacy showcases Baltimore's rich Negro League history: Its about championship teams, about cultural pride in those teams. . .These stories, presented against a backdrop of segregation in 20th century America, are told in the Negro League gallery. The National Great Blacks in Wax displays replicas of famous players and the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture features an homage to Leon Day as part of the permanent display, Building Maryland, Building America.

Most recently, the President's Cup is a new initiative to unite Baltimore's youth by using baseball to bring together groups of high school students from different backgrounds to compete with each other. The initiative represents an exciting new addition to the Council President's ongoing P.L.A.Y. (Productive Lives, Active Youth) campaign that provides youth with a wide range of opportunities to strengthen their self-confidence, develop leadership skills, learn from positive role models, and be rewarded athletically for their academic achievements.

As the storied members of the Negro Baseball Leagues fought to overcome academic, social, and economic odds, so too do the youth of today. Celebrating the courage, commitment, and indomitable spirit that drove these men to seek excellence in the face of formidable odds manifests to our youth that, should they stay the course, success is within their reach.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That this Body joins in the annual celebration of Negro Baseball League Day on the second Saturday of May in recognition of the talent of the great players of the Negro Baseball League who, for the love of the sport, persevered to play professional baseball in a league of their own while consistently denied entrance to Major League Baseball.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Friends of Leon Day & the Negro Leagues, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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