

Senate Resolution 674

By: Senators Jones of the 10th, Merritt of the 9th, Mallow of the 2nd, Harbison of the 15th and Rahman of the 5th

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing and honoring the legacy and history of the 1955 Cannon Street Y.M.C.A
2 All-Stars; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, in the summer of 1955, the State of South Carolina boasted 62 chartered Little
4 League programs, yet all but one was composed exclusively of White players; and

5 WHEREAS, the Cannon Street Y.M.C.A. Little League, established two years prior, stood
6 as the first and only African American Little League in South Carolina officially sanctioned
7 by Little League Baseball, Incorporated; and

8 WHEREAS, the league's four teams, sponsored by Black businesses and civic organizations,
9 thrived under the ardent support of parents and local citizens, forming a beacon of hope and
10 unity amidst a segregated sporting landscape; and

11 WHEREAS, following the initial half of the season, Cannon Street Y.M.C.A. President
12 Robert F. Morrison and the league's dedicated coaches selected an "All-Star" team that would
13 represent the league in Charleston's traditionally "Whites only" Little League tournament,
14 with aspirations of earning a coveted place in the Little League World Series; and

15 WHEREAS, instead of embracing the call for integration, city officials chose to cancel the
16 tournament, thereby elevating the Cannon Street All-Stars to an unanticipated victory by
17 default; and

18 WHEREAS, the ensuing South Carolina state tournament witnessed a show of "massive
19 resistance" as White Little League officials, coaches, and parents orchestrated a boycott,
20 resulting in the Cannon Street All-Stars being crowned unofficial state champions; and

21 WHEREAS, although Little League Baseball steadfastly declined to accommodate
22 segregationist demands for a separate tournament, it chose to uphold a rule preventing teams
23 advancing by forfeit from competing for the World Series title; and

24 WHEREAS, in a letter to Cannon Street Y.M.C.A. President Robert F. Morrison, Little
25 League President Peter J. McGovern expressed profound regret for the "innocent victims of
26 alien influences" and extended an invitation for the All-Stars to attend the Little League
27 World Series as his guests; and

28 WHEREAS, through the collective financial contributions of parents and community leaders
29 and the invaluable assistance of civil rights activist Esau Jenkins, the All-Stars embarked on
30 their journey to Williamsport, Pennsylvania, the location of the World Series; and

31 WHEREAS, during their practice session at the event, the All-Stars demonstrated their
32 immense skill and enthusiasm for the sport, which inspired stadium-wide chants of "let them
33 play!"; and

34 WHEREAS, despite impassioned pleas from President Morrison and their devoted coaches,
35 their participation in the championship remained unrealized; and

36 WHEREAS, the team's efforts to integrate youth baseball caused White teams from several
37 southern states to secede from Little League and form a segregated organization known as
38 Little Boys Baseball, Inc., which now operates as Dixie Youth Baseball; and

39 WHEREAS, in 2002, the team reunited in Williamsport and were officially acknowledged
40 as the "1955 South Carolina State Champions," cementing their place in history as pioneers
41 of integration and trailblazers for equality in the world of youth baseball; and

42 WHEREAS, the roster of the Cannon Street All-Stars included Allen Jackson, John Rivers,
43 Carl Johnson, Arthur Peoples, Charles Bradley, John Bailey, William "Buck" Godfrey,
44 Vernon Grey, Leroy Major, John Mack, David Middleton, Norman Robinson, Maurice
45 Singleton, and Vermont "Pop" Brown with alternates Leroy Carter and George Gregory as
46 well as August Holt, who became an honorary team member and team historian in 1995; and

47 WHEREAS, the coaches and founders who played instrumental roles in this extraordinary
48 journey were Lee J. Bennett, Walter Burke, Rufus Dilligard, A.O. Graham, Robert Morrison,
49 R.H. Penn, and Benjamin Singleton.

50 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
51 recognize and honor the legacy of the 1955 Cannon Street Y.M.C.A All-Stars and their
52 importance on the cultural landscape of the State of South Carolina.

53 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
54 to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to each member of the
55 1955 Cannon Street Y.M.C.A All-Stars.