
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 735 Session of
2020

INTRODUCED BY KINSEY, WILLIAMS AND GAINES, FEBRUARY 24, 2020

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, FEBRUARY 24, 2020

A RESOLUTION

1 Commemorating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Negro
2 National League.

3 WHEREAS, In February 1920, a group of African-American
4 baseball team owners met at a YMCA in Kansas City, Missouri, to
5 discuss the prospect of an African-American baseball league,
6 which led to the creation of the Negro National League; and

7 WHEREAS, While African Americans initially played baseball
8 alongside white teammates in the 1860s, Jim Crow laws,
9 segregationist beliefs and unwritten rules eventually resulted
10 in professional baseball shutting out African-American
11 ballplayers; and

12 WHEREAS, African Americans formed their own teams through the
13 latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century,
14 including teams in cities and towns throughout Pennsylvania; and

15 WHEREAS, In 1866, after facing restrictions against joining
16 white baseball clubs, the Excelsior Base Ball Club and the
17 Pythian Base Ball Club, both of Philadelphia, were organized and
18 stood as two of the earliest African-American baseball teams in

1 the nation; and

2 WHEREAS, African-American baseball teams were formed in
3 Allegheny, Allentown, Altoona, Athens, Bethlehem, Blairsville,
4 Canonsburg, Carlisle, Chambersburg, Chester, Columbia,
5 Connellsville, Frankford, Gettysburg, Harrisburg, Hollidaysburg,
6 Lancaster, Lawrenceville, Lock Haven, Marcus Hook, Marietta,
7 Mechanicsburg, Media, Middleton, Monongahela, Montrose, Mount
8 Joy, New Castle, Norristown, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh,
9 Pottsville, Pottstown, Reading, Scranton, Sharon Hill,
10 Shippensburg, Steelton, Stroudsburg, Uniontown, Washington, West
11 Chester, Wilkes-Barre, Williamsport, Wrightsville and York in
12 the 19th century; and

13 WHEREAS, In 1883, two teams made up of African-American
14 females were organized in Philadelphia, the Dolly Vardens and
15 the Captain Jinks; and

16 WHEREAS, The first professional baseball league organized by
17 and for African Americans was the 1887 National Colored Baseball
18 League, which included two Pennsylvania teams; and

19 WHEREAS, In 1903, the Philadelphia Giants played in the
20 first-ever Colored World Championship against the Cuban "X"
21 Giants; and

22 WHEREAS, The original nine Negro National League ballplayers
23 inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame all have Pennsylvania
24 ties, with Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, Buck Leonard, Cool Papa
25 Bell, Judy Johnson, Oscar Charleston, John Henry Lloyd and
26 Martin Dihigo all having played for Pennsylvania teams and Monte
27 Irvin attending Lincoln University in Oxford, Pennsylvania; and

28 WHEREAS, More official Negro National League games were
29 played in this Commonwealth than any other state; and

30 WHEREAS, During the 1800s and early 1900s, African-American

1 baseball leagues provided African-American ballplayers the
2 opportunity to display their talent and thrive in a professional
3 setting; and

4 WHEREAS, In 1947, former Negro American League ballplayer
5 Jackie Robinson officially integrated Major League Baseball when
6 he played first base for the Brooklyn Dodgers; and

7 WHEREAS, The successes of Jackie Robinson, Larry Doby, Roy
8 Campanella and Monte Irvin in Major League Baseball drew the
9 attention of African-American communities and drained the
10 African-American baseball leagues of their fan base; and

11 WHEREAS, The Negro National League eventually disbanded in
12 1948 while the Negro American League would remain in existence
13 until 1960; and

14 WHEREAS, Though the breakthroughs of Jackie Robinson and
15 other African-American ballplayers into the major leagues
16 signaled the eventual decline of African-American baseball
17 leagues, the organization of these leagues undoubtedly pushed
18 the game into uncharted territory; and

19 WHEREAS, The Negro National League and other African-American
20 baseball leagues proved that African-American ballplayers could
21 play on even terms with their white counterparts and draw just
22 as much interest from baseball fans; and

23 WHEREAS, "The leagues died having served their purpose,
24 shining a light on African American ballplayers at a time when
25 the white majors simply did not want to know," said baseball
26 writer Steven Goldman; therefore be it

27 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives commemorate the
28 100th anniversary of the founding of the Negro National League;
29 and be it further

30 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives celebrate the

1 history of all African-American baseball leagues and recognize
2 the exemplary participation of Pennsylvania athletes,
3 entrepreneurs and fans in those leagues.