

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

House Concurrent Resolution No. 21

97TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVES DUNN (Sponsor), MIMS,
ELLINGTON AND GARDNER (Co-sponsors).

5725H.011

WHEREAS, Jack Roosevelt Robinson, born on January 31, 1919, in Cairo, Georgia, to a family of sharecroppers was the first African-American to play major league baseball; and

WHEREAS, throughout his decade-long career with the Brooklyn Dodgers, Jackie Robinson made advancements in the cause of civil rights for black athletes; and

WHEREAS, from 1942 to 1944, Robinson served as a second lieutenant in the United States Army. He never saw combat, however, he was arrested and court-martialed during boot camp after he refused to move to the back of a segregated bus during training. Robinson was later acquitted of the charges and received an honorable discharge. His courage and moral objection to segregation were precursors to the impact Robinson would have in major league baseball; and

WHEREAS, when Robinson began to play professional baseball the sport was segregated and African-Americans and whites played in separate leagues; and

WHEREAS, Robinson was recommended by Hilton Smith, Hall of Fame pitcher for the Kansas City Monarchs, to owner of the Monarchs, J.L. Wilkinson, who signed Robinson to his first professional contract in the Negro League; and

WHEREAS, Robinson played his first game in Kansas City with the Monarchs on May 6, 1945, and went 1-for-4 with a run-scoring double in the Monarchs 6-2 home-opening defeat of the Chicago American Giants; and

WHEREAS, Robinson replaced All-Star Jesse Williams at shortstop. Williams moved to second base and the two formed a formidable double-play combination. Both were named to the East-West All-Star game in 1945; and

WHEREAS, when the Monarchs were home Robinson primarily stayed at the Street Hotel, a Black-owned hotel formerly located at the corner of 18th and The Paseo, less than a block from where the Negro League Baseball Museum currently operates; and

33 **WHEREAS**, Robinson enjoyed the ribs at Ol' Kentuck Barbecue, which was later
34 operated by George Gates, the father of barbecue baron Ollie Gates and the forerunner to Kansas
35 City's ever-popular Gates Barbeque restaurants; and

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37 **WHEREAS**, Robinson played in 41 games for the Kansas City Monarchs with a .345
38 batting average, 10 doubles, 4 triples, and 5 home runs. Robinson's salary was \$400 a month;
39 and

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41 **WHEREAS**, Robinson was chosen by Branch Rickey, president of the Brooklyn
42 Dodgers, to help integrate major league baseball and joined the all-white Montreal Royals, a
43 farm team of the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1946. On April 15, 1947, Robinson played his first game
44 in Ebbets Field for the Brooklyn Dodgers; and

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46 **WHEREAS**, Branch Rickey knew there would be difficult times ahead for the young
47 athlete so he made Robinson promise to not fight back when confronted with racism. From the
48 beginning of his career Robinson was tested, with even some of his teammates objecting to
49 having an African-American on their team; and

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51 **WHEREAS**, people in the crowds sometimes jeered at Robinson and his family received
52 threats. In one infamous game the Philadelphia Phillies manager Ben Chapman and his team
53 shouted derogatory terms at Robinson from their dugout; and

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55 **WHEREAS**, many players from opposing teams threatened not to play against the
56 Dodgers. Even his own teammates threatened to sit out, but Dodgers manager Leo Durocher
57 informed them that he would sooner trade them than Robinson. Durocher's loyalty to Robinson
58 set the tone for the rest of his career with the Dodgers; and

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60 **WHEREAS**, Jackie Robinson succeeded in putting the prejudice and racial strife aside
61 and showed everyone what a talented player he was. In his first year Robinson hit 12 home runs,
62 led the National League in stolen bases, was selected as Rookie of the Year, and helped the
63 Dodgers win the National League pennant; and

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65 **WHEREAS**, Robinson soon became a hero of baseball even among former critics and
66 was the subject of the popular song, "Did You See Jackie Robinson Hit That Ball?". An
67 exceptional base runner, Robinson stole home 19 times in his career setting a league record. He
68 also became the highest-paid athlete in Dodger history and his success in the major leagues
69 opened the door for other African-American players such as Satchel Paige, Willie Mays, and
70 Hank Aaron; and

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72 **WHEREAS**, Jackie Robinson also became a vocal champion for African-American
73 athletes, civil rights, and other social and political causes. In 1949, he testified on discrimination
74 before the House Un-American Activities Committee. In 1952, he publicly called out the

75 Yankees as a racist organization for not having broken the color barrier five years earlier after
76 he began playing with the Dodgers; and

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78 **WHEREAS**, in his decade-long career with the Dodgers Robinson and his team won the
79 National League pennant several times. Finally, in 1955, he helped them achieve the ultimate
80 victory, the World Series; and

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82 **WHEREAS**, after baseball Robinson became active in business and continued his work
83 as an activist for social change. He served on the board of the NAACP until 1967 and was the
84 first African-American to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962. In 1972, the
85 Dodgers retired his uniform number of 42; and

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87 **WHEREAS**, in later years Robinson continued to lobby for greater integration in sports.
88 After his death on October 24, 1972, his wife established the Jackie Robinson Foundation
89 dedicated to honoring his life and work by helping young people in need through scholarships
90 and mentoring programs; and

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92 **WHEREAS**, in 1997, the world celebrated the 50th anniversary of Jackie's breaking of
93 major league baseball's color barrier, honoring the man who stood defiantly against those who
94 would work against racial equality and acknowledged the profound influence of one man's life
95 on the American culture:

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97 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the members of the House of
98 Representatives of the Ninety-seventh General Assembly, Second Regular Session, the Senate
99 concurring therein, hereby recognize the achievements of Jack Roosevelt "Jackie" Robinson,
100 both on and off the baseball field, as the first African-American major league baseball player and
101 for his courageous civil rights activism in the face of racial abuse and harassment; and

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103 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the members of the Missouri General Assembly
104 recognize April 15 of each year as "Jackie Robinson Day" in Missouri and encourage the citizens
105 of this state to observe the day with appropriate activities and events to honor the achievements
106 and legacy of Jackie Robinson, the first African-American to play major league baseball.

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