

Date of Hearing: April 5, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, TOURISM, AND
INTERNET MEDIA

Kansen Chu, Chair

ACR 42 (Holden) – As Introduced March 22, 2017

SUBJECT: Jackie Robinson

SUMMARY: This measure would recognize the 70th anniversary of Jackie Robinson breaking the color barrier in a major professional sports league, celebrate his life and legacy, and acknowledge the impact he continues to have on generations of players, fans, and those who persevere towards unity, equality, and liberty. Specifically, **this Resolution** makes the following findings:

- 1) Jack Roosevelt “Jackie” Robinson was born in Cairo, Georgia, on January 31, 1919, to a family of sharecroppers. His mother, Mallie Robinson, single-handedly raised Jackie and her four other children. In the early 1920s, the family moved to Pasadena, where they were the only black family on their block, and the prejudice they encountered only strengthened their bond.
- 2) In Pasadena, Jackie Robinson attended John Muir High School and Pasadena Junior College, where he was an excellent athlete and played four sports—football, basketball, track, and baseball—and was named the region’s Most Valuable Player in baseball in 1938.
- 3) Jackie Robinson continued his education at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he became the university’s first student to win varsity letters in four sports, and where, in 1941, despite his athletic success, he was forced to leave UCLA just shy of his graduation due to financial hardship.
- 4) Jackie Robinson moved to Honolulu, Hawaii, where he played football for the semiprofessional Honolulu Bears, but his season with the Honolulu Bears was cut short when the United States entered World War II.
- 5) Jackie Robinson served as a second lieutenant in the United States Army from 1942 to 1944. He was arrested and court martialed during boot camp after he refused to move to the back of a segregated bus during training.
- 6) Jackie Robinson was later acquitted of the charges and received an honorable discharge. His courage and moral objection to the segregation he encountered were precursors to the impact he would have on major league baseball.
- 7) After his discharge from the Army in 1944, Jackie Robinson began playing in the Negro Leagues, but he was soon chosen by Branch Rickey, the President and General Manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, to help integrate major league baseball.
- 8) Jackie Robinson joined the all-white Montreal Royals, a farm team for the Brooklyn Dodgers, in 1945, and subsequently moved to Florida in 1946 to begin spring training with

the Royals, and played his first game on March 17 of that year.

- 9) Despite racial abuse, particularly at away games, Jackie Robinson had an outstanding start with the Royals during the 1946 season, leading the International League with a .349 batting average. This excellent year led to his promotion to the Brooklyn Dodgers, and his debut game on April 15, 1947, marked the first time in the 20th century that an African American athlete played in the major leagues.
- 10) Even though some of his Dodger teammates objected to Jackie Robinson joining the team, Dodgers manager Leo Durocher informed them that he would sooner trade them than Robinson. Durocher's loyalty to Robinson set the tone for the rest of Robinson's Dodger career.
- 11) The harassment of Jackie Robinson continued, however, most notably by the Philadelphia Phillies and their manager Ben Chapman. During one infamous game, Chapman and his team shouted epithets at Robinson from their dugout, while many players on opposing teams threatened not to play against the Dodgers.
- 12) Many others defended Jackie Robinson's right to play in the major leagues, including National League President Ford Frick, Baseball Commissioner A.B. "Happy" Chandler, and future Hall of Fame members Hank Greenberg and Harold "Pee Wee" Reese.
- 13) In one incident, while fans harassed Jackie Robinson from the stands, his teammate Pee Wee Reese walked over and put his arm around Robinson, a gesture that has become legendary in baseball history.
- 14) Jackie Robinson succeeded in putting prejudice and racial strife aside, and showed everyone what a talented player he was; so much so, that in his first year, he hit 12 home runs and helped the Dodgers win the National League pennant.
- 15) In that year, Jackie Robinson led the National League in stolen bases and was selected as Rookie of the Year. He continued to wow fans and critics alike with impressive feats, such as an outstanding .342 batting average during the 1949 season, the lead in stolen bases that year, and the National League's Most Valuable Player Award.
- 16) Jackie Robinson became a vocal champion for African American athletes, civil rights, and other social and political causes, so that, after baseball, he became active in business and continued his work as an activist for social change.
- 17) Jackie Robinson worked as an executive for the Chock Full O'Nuts coffee company and restaurant chain, and helped establish the Freedom National Bank. He also served on the board of the NAACP until 1967 and was the first African American to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1962. In 1972, the Dodgers retired his uniform number of 42.
- 18) Jackie Robinson retired on January 5, 1957, from professional baseball with an impressive career batting average of .311, and in his later years, he continued to lobby for greater integration in sports.

- 19) Jackie Robinson died from heart problems and diabetes complications on October 24, 1972, in Stamford, Connecticut. He was survived by his wife, Rachel Isum Robinson, a nursing student whom he had met at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and two of his three children, Sharon and David; his oldest child, Jackie Jr., had died in an automobile accident in 1971.
- 20) Jackie Robinson's jersey number 42 was retired leaguewide in 1997, and he remains the only player to have his number retired leaguewide. Jackie Robinson's legacy is further recognized by his alma mater, UCLA, which has retired the number 42 across all collegiate sports programs within UCLA.
- 21) In 2004, Major League Baseball declared April 15 as Jackie Robinson Day, and since 2007 Major League Baseball has celebrated Jackie Robinson Day by allowing every player to wear jersey number 42.
- 22) On the 50th anniversary of Jackie Robinson's historic debut, all major league baseball teams across the nation celebrated this milestone; the United States Postal Service has honored Jackie Robinson by making him the subject of commemorative postage stamps; and on Tuesday, April 15, 1997, President Bill Clinton paid tribute to Jackie Robinson at Shea Stadium in New York in a special ceremony.
- 23) The Los Angeles Dodgers Foundation partnered with the Helen and Will Webster Foundation, the Pasadena Tournament of Roses, and the Pasadena Educational Foundation to renovate the John Muir High School baseball field and name it "Stadium 42," in honor of Jackie Robinson's honor. Behind home plate, Stadium 42 is adorned with a placard containing a quote from Jackie Robinson: "A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives."
- 24) Jackie Robinson's life and legacy will be remembered as one of the most important in American history. In 2017, the world celebrates the 70th anniversary of Jackie Robinson breaking major league baseball's color barrier, and in doing so, we honor the man who stood defiantly against those who would work against racial equality and acknowledge the profound influence of one man's life on American culture.

FISCAL EFFECT: None. This Resolution is keyed non-fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

- 1) **COMMENTS:** *Author statement and support:* In celebrating the 70th anniversary of Jackie Robinson breaking major league baseball's color barrier, the author wishes to offer the following statement: "A native of Pasadena, California, Jackie Robinson has set the standard not only as a professional athlete, but as a social agent for change. Jackie Robinson served as second lieutenant in the U.S. army during World War II from 1942-1944. However, he was court marshalled for challenging racial segregation and refusing to move to the back of a segregated bus during training. His stance against racial injustice continued when he became the first person of color to break the color barrier in Major Sports League. Jackie Robinson became a living testimony for racial equality and inclusion. The values of Jackie Robinson reflect the values of the diverse state of California. In 1962, Robinson became the first African American to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. On June 4, 1972, the Dodgers retired his uniform, No. 42 and on April 15, 1997, all of Major League baseball also retired No. 42, officially making the 15th of April Jackie Robinson Day, in honor of his

April 15, 1947, debut game. Following his death, the Jackie Robinson Foundation was instituted. The foundation provides scholarships to 141 students annually who are sent to more than 60 colleges all over the country. Jackie Robinson is more than an athlete. Jackie Robinson is groundbreaking athlete, advocate for justice and a model citizen of California.”

The Los Angeles Dodgers similarly celebrates the many achievements Jackie Robinson made to baseball and to society while overcoming “unimaginable bigotry.” They wish to offer the following statement in support of this measure: “Jackie Robinson’s life and legacy will be remembered as one of the most important in American history. This year, the world celebrates the 70th anniversary of Jackie Robinsons breaking major league baseball’s color barrier, and in doing so, we honor the profound influence of one man’s life on American culture. The Los Angeles Dodgers are proud to support this important legislation.”

- 2) *Background: Racial segregation in American sports:* Numerous professional American sports were segregated in the first half of the 20th century. According to the Wikipedia page on Race and Sports, African-American players participated in the National Football League from its inception in 1920 through 1933, but there were no African-American players from 1933 until the league reintegrated in 1946. Although Japanese-American Wataru Misaka broke the National Basketball Association’s (NBA’s) color barrier in 1947 by playing for the New York Knicks, the NBA officially integrated in 1950. Prior to Jackie Robinson playing on a Major League roster in 1945, the highest level of play at which African-Americans could compete in baseball was represented by the various “Negro Leagues” located primarily in the Midwest, northeast, and southern regions of the country. According to the Negro League’s Baseball Museum, these leagues started forming in 1920 and lasted until 1960. Although a few African-Americans played in golf tournaments before then, the “Caucasians only” clause was not struck from the Professional Golfers’ Association of America’s (PGA’s) constitution until 1961, according to the African American Registry, a non-profit education organization. As such, the PGA maintained its all-white status until that year.
- 3) *Prior legislation:* ACR 197 (Gatto), Resolution Chapter 165, Statutes of 2016, designated a specified portion of Interstate 210 from Gould Avenue to Orange Grove Boulevard in the County of Los Angeles as the Jackie Robinson Memorial Highway.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Los Angeles Dodgers

Opposition

There is no opposition on file.

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