

By Senator Soto

14-04107-15

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Senate Resolution

A resolution by the Senate of the State of Florida requesting that Major League Baseball retire the number 21 in honor of Roberto Clemente.

WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente was born on August 18, 1934, in Carolina, Puerto Rico, and

WHEREAS, for 18 seasons, from 1955 to 1972, Roberto Clemente played Major League Baseball and wore the number 21 for the Pittsburgh Pirates, and

WHEREAS, as a Spanish-speaking black man, Roberto Clemente battled against discrimination in America and was outspoken about the inequities he faced, eventually convincing the Pittsburgh Pirates management to allow black players to travel in their own station wagon, and

WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente said that enduring the unjust racial divide during spring training was like being in prison, and

WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente's accomplishments as a Major League Baseball player include 3,000 hits, 4 National League batting titles, a .317 lifetime batting average, and 12 Gold Glove awards, making him perhaps the best defensive right fielder of all time, and

WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente confronted and overcame racism and language barriers to become the first dark-skinned Latino to achieve unquestioned superstar status as a Major League Baseball player, and

WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente's admiration for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his participation in the civil rights

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30 movement were spurred by the racism he experienced in the United
31 States, and

32 WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente was an intelligent and passionate
33 political activist who marched in the protests of the 1960s and
34 spent time with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when the civil
35 rights leader visited Clemente in Puerto Rico, and

36 WHEREAS, when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated
37 in Memphis on April 4, 1968, Pittsburg Pirates All-Star Roberto
38 Clemente was devastated by the news and, with his teammates,
39 persuaded the Pittsburgh Pirates and Houston Astros to postpone
40 their April 8 opening day game until April 10 because of Dr.
41 King's funeral, and

42 WHEREAS, during Roberto Clemente's professional career, he
43 saw significant change in both Major League Baseball and
44 American society, and

45 WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente once said, "Anytime you have an
46 opportunity to make a difference in this world and you don't,
47 then you are wasting your time on this earth," and

48 WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente exhibited a passion for young
49 fans, becoming a role model for all players, but particularly
50 for Latinos who played with him and against him, and for
51 generations of players since then who owe him a debt of
52 gratitude that can never be repaid, and

53 WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente was voted the Most Valuable
54 Player of the 1971 World Series and made history by addressing a
55 national television audience in Spanish during the clubhouse
56 celebration, and

57 WHEREAS, on December 31, 1972, the plane carrying Roberto
58 Clemente on a relief mission to provide emergency assistance to

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59 the victims of a Nicaraguan earthquake crashed into the sea, and
60 all on board perished, and

61 WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente was posthumously inducted into
62 the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1973, becoming only the second
63 player for whom the 5-year mandatory waiting period was waived,
64 and

65 WHEREAS, Roberto Clemente was posthumously presented three
66 civilian awards of the United States government from the
67 President of the United States, including the first Presidential
68 Citizens Medal, the Roberto Walker Clemente Congressional Gold
69 Medal, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and

70 WHEREAS, in 2009, the Florida Puerto Rican/Hispanic Chamber
71 of Commerce, Inc., the United Third Bridge, Inc., the Brevard
72 County School Board, and other partners named the largest sports
73 complex in Palm Bay, at Heritage High School, after Roberto
74 Clemente, and

75 WHEREAS, the legacy of Roberto Clemente as a hero of the
76 game and a positive role model extends beyond the island of
77 Puerto Rico and the Latino community, with his most significant
78 contributions to a better world recorded in the history books,
79 not the baseball record book, NOW, THEREFORE,

80

81 Be It Resolved by the Senate of the State of Florida:

82

83 That the Senate of the State of Florida hereby respectfully
84 requests and calls upon Major League Baseball to retire Roberto
85 Clemente's jersey number 21 both as a fitting tribute to a
86 remarkable athlete and human being and as a testament of the
87 best that America's "national pastime" has to offer.

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88 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution, with
89 the Seal of the Senate affixed, be presented to Major League
90 Baseball and Commissioner Robert D. Manfred, Jr., as a tangible
91 token of the sentiments of the Florida Senate.