

By: Dukes

H.R. No. 954

R E S O L U T I O N

1 WHEREAS, In a fitting tribute to an outstanding career,
2 baseball star Willie Wells was inducted into the Texas Sports Hall
3 of Fame on February 7, 2011; and

4 WHEREAS, Willie James Wells was born in Austin in the early
5 years of the 1900s and excelled in both football and baseball at
6 Anderson High School; while still a teenager, he began his
7 professional career with the Austin Black Senators of the Texas
8 Negro League; his success there earned him a promotion to the St.
9 Louis Stars of the Negro National League; and

10 WHEREAS, In an era when shortstops were not known for their
11 power, Mr. Wells made a reputation with both his bat and his glove;
12 though not as large as most sluggers, he was an accomplished power
13 hitter, and in 1926 he set the league record for home runs with 27;
14 in addition, he was a skilled fielder at the most demanding
15 defensive position; and

16 WHEREAS, Mr. Wells helped the Stars win championships in
17 1928, 1930, and 1931; he went on to play for such famous teams as the
18 Homestead Grays, the Kansas City Monarchs, the Chicago American
19 Giants, the Newark Eagles, and the New York Black Yankees, being
20 named an all-star eight times between 1933 and 1945; in the
21 off-season, Mr. Wells played winter ball in Cuba, where he was a
22 two-time most valuable player, and during the 1940s, he played for
23 Veracruz, Tampico, and Mexico City in the Mexican League; it was
24 there that he was given his nickname, El Diablo, because of the

1 intensity he brought to the diamond; in his later years, he managed
2 the Birmingham Black Barons and the Winnipeg Buffaloes; and

3 WHEREAS, Further notoriety was achieved by Mr. Wells when he
4 became one of the first players to wear a batting helmet; after
5 being hit in the head by a pitch in 1942, he soon began stepping into
6 the batter's box with something that looked very much like a
7 construction worker's hard hat on his head; such protective
8 measures were practically unheard of at the time, and it would be
9 decades before they would become mandatory; and

10 WHEREAS, This exceptional athlete was one of many African
11 American stars who were prevented from playing in Major League
12 Baseball because of the league's prohibition against black players;
13 by the time Jackie Robinson, to whom he had taught the finer points
14 of the double play pivot, broke professional baseball's color line
15 in 1946 and 1947, Mr. Wells was already near the age of 40, and his
16 prime playing days were behind him; though his achievements were
17 overlooked for years, he was finally elected to the National
18 Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, in 1997, eight years
19 after he passed away in Austin in 1989; and

20 WHEREAS, This notable Texan delighted crowds in the United
21 States, Mexico, and Cuba with his skill and determination on the
22 ball field, and he is richly deserving of this prestigious honor;
23 now, therefore, be it

24 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 82nd Texas
25 Legislature hereby commemorate the induction of Willie Wells into
26 the Texas Sports Hall of Fame and pay tribute to the memory of this
27 legendary athlete.