

2015-J2726

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Rucker Pro Legends

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that the quality and character of life of the citizens of New York State are greatly enriched by the availability of exceptional recreational institutions which have become an important part of the history of our State; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Rucker Pro Legends; and

WHEREAS, In 1946, Holcombe Llewellyn Rucker, a New York City Playground Director and a World War II Veteran, organized a summer basketball league that reached thousands of youngsters in New York City; and

WHEREAS, When Holcombe Rucker first started these summer-time tournaments, he met with opposition from his peers and local officials who felt basketball was a winter sport that ended in the spring; he argued the youth needed these intensive events to keep them off the streets; and

WHEREAS, Holcombe Rucker prevailed in these efforts, sending over 700 youngsters to college during his 14 years of running the Summer League; many of these children went on to play in the National Basketball Association; and

WHEREAS, Holcombe Rucker died in 1965, and the Rucker Pro Tournament, also known as the Rucker Pro League, was created by Bob McCullough and Fred Crawford in his honor; and

WHEREAS, In addition, the Each One Teach One Youth League was created with a mission of using sports as a vehicle to prevent violence and motivate young boys and girls to pursue higher education and to explore various careers; and

WHEREAS, In 1969, the City of New York named the park located at 155th Street and 8th Avenue, Rucker Park, and in 1972, it was renamed Holcombe Rucker Square; and

WHEREAS, A basketball landmark, Rucker Park became the site of numerous battles between such NBA stars as Wilt Chamberlain, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Dr. "J" Julius Erving, and Walt Frazier, and such playground Legends as Herman "Helicopter" Knowings, Earl Manigault, Joe "The Destroyer" Hammond, "Pee Wee" Kirkland and Pablo Robertson of The Harlem Globetrotters; and

WHEREAS, Holcombe Rucker Park has been featured in several major motion pictures including "Above The Rim," "Rebound: Story of Earl Manigault," "On Hallow Ground," "The Real Rucker Park Legends," and "Streetball Champions of Rucker Park"; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, this renowned basketball venue has been written about in such books as CITY GAME: BASKETBALL FROM THE GARDEN TO THE PLAYGROUND IN HARLEM, FOUL-THE CONNIE HAWKINS STORY, and ASPHALT GODS: AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE RUCKER TOURNAMENT; and

WHEREAS, Today, Holcombe Rucker Park is a popular tourist attraction with over 100,000 visitors arriving each summer from across the United States and as far away as Japan, China, Italy, and Puerto Rico, just to take pictures of themselves in front of the Holcombe Rucker sign; and

WHEREAS, It is the intent of this Legislative Body that New York State's invaluable cultural, educational, and recreational institutions should be celebrated and recognized by all the citizens of this great State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Rucker Pro Legends; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Rucker Pro Legends.