

2017-J4668

Senate Resolution No. 4668

BY: Senator KENNEDY

HONORING the legacy of Baseball Hall of Famer
James J. Collins on the 75th Anniversary of his
death on March 6, 2018

WHEREAS, It is with great pride that this Legislative Body commends those exceptional athletes who represented the State of New York and brought honor to the game of professional baseball, distinguishing themselves through notable achievement and thereby representing this great Empire State with exceptional dignity and determination; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to honor the legacy of Baseball Hall of Famer James J. Collins on the 75th Anniversary of his death on Tuesday, March 6, 2018; and

WHEREAS, James Joseph "Jimmy" Collins was born on January 16, 1870, in Niagara Falls, New York, to Irish immigrants Anthony and Alice Collins; two years later, the family moved to Buffalo, New York's First Ward, a predominantly Irish American neighborhood in the south of the city where James' father worked as a policeman for three decades; and

WHEREAS, Upon receiving his early education in Catholic parochial schools, James J. Collins earned his diploma in commercial studies from St. Joseph's College (known today as St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute);

and

WHEREAS, After graduation, James J. Collins worked as a clerk at the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad's Black Rock Station; and

WHEREAS, An exceptional athlete, James J. Collins was a member of two amateur baseball teams in Buffalo; he played outfield for the Socials, and then third base for the North Buffalo team; and

WHEREAS, In May of 1893, James J. Collins began to play minor league baseball with the Buffalo Bisons; during the 1894 season, he recorded a batting average of .352 (among the league's top ten hitters) and led the league with 198 hits; and

WHEREAS, James J. Collins was then recruited by the Boston Beaneaters for their 1895 season; in May of that year, he was loaned to the Louisville Colonels where he was quickly made the team's starting third baseman; after he was recalled to Boston, he negotiated for a salary that was four times the average pay of an American worker at the time; and

WHEREAS, James J. Collins had another successful season in 1897, when he held a .346 batting average and knocked in 132 runs, leading the league in both putouts and assists; he followed with an equally impressive 1898 season, in which he hit .328 (seventh in the league), drove in 111 runs and belted a league-high 15 home runs; and

WHEREAS, In 1900, James J. Collins was offered the manager's job with the Boston Americans (now known as the Red Sox) of the newly-formed

American League; in this capacity, James led the Americans to the first-ever World Series Championship in 1903; and

WHEREAS, James J. Collins continued to be involved with organized baseball until 1912, playing for the Boston Americans and Philadelphia Athletics in the major leagues and the Minneapolis Millers and Providence Grays at the minor league level; and

WHEREAS, In 1914, James J. Collins, his wife, and their children moved back to Buffalo, where Collins had been investing in a real estate business since 1900; and

WHEREAS, In 1922, James J. Collins was appointed President of the Buffalo Municipal Baseball Association, where he served 22 consecutive terms; under his luminous leadership the municipal league (muni-league) expanded opportunities for thousands of young people to develop their baseball talents, a vast improvement over the former system which could only accommodate a few hundred players; and

WHEREAS, In this role, James J. Collins' reputation as "greatest third baseman of all time" was reinvigorated, leading to tall tales and fables of his exceptional fielding of bunts; and

WHEREAS, James J. Collins passed away on March 6, 1943, in Buffalo, at the age of 73; two months prior, the sports editor of the Buffalo Evening News began a press campaign to have James elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York; and

WHEREAS, James J. Collins was posthumously inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1945; he was the first player inducted into the Hall of Fame to be chosen primarily for his merits as a third baseman; and

WHEREAS, According to family legend, during James J. Collins' wake, many former teammates and players who were in attendance drank from the

silver championship cup before it was interred with the casket; and

WHEREAS, Loved and appreciated by many, James J. Collins has been immortalized in a 2013 song by the Boston-based Celtic punk band The Dropkick Murphys; and

WHEREAS, A consummate professional and regarded as one of the best third-base players of all time, James J. Collins' exemplary performances for various baseball teams were reflective of his dedication, determination and personal commitment; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the entire period of his outstanding athletic career, James J. Collins stood constant in dignity, good grace and humor, and earned the respect and admiration of his coaches, teammates and opponents; and

WHEREAS, A gifted athlete, James J. Collins was a renowned role model in the sport of professional baseball; his character and achievements stand as a sterling example and inspiration to all who would aspire to success; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor the legacy of Baseball Hall of Famer James J. Collins on the 75th Anniversary of his death on March 6, 2018; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of James J. Collins.