



HR0226

LRB103 31963 MST 60734 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, Jackie Robinson is known for breaking the color barrier in Major League Baseball in 1947, but Keith Kelley was one of the first in baseball for the State of Illinois; he broke the barrier on June 11, 1950 for the Sunday Morning League of Peoria, a year before the Chicago White Sox and three years prior to the Chicago Cubs; and

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WHEREAS, Keith Kelley got his start in the Peoria Sunday Morning League, which is recognized by the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown as the oldest amateur baseball league in America; established more than a century ago, the league has seen countless future and former major leaguers and elite local players on its fields, including Jim Thome, Joe Girardi, Mike Dunne, Zack Monroe, and many more; and

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WHEREAS, Keith Kelley, a 6-foot-2, 185-pound, right-handed pitcher, had starred at then Peoria Central High School in 1950, where he went 13 and 3 with 154 strikeouts in 106 innings; he received the schools' Jack Koch Award as its most outstanding athlete; and

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WHEREAS, In between those Sunday Morning League bookends, Keith Kelley played for the Brooklyn Dodgers farm clubs, joined the Air Force, and participated in the Dodgers spring

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1 training in Vero Beach, Florida with legends such as Robinson,  
2 Roy Campanella, Don Newcombe, and Maury Wills; he also met  
3 renowned boxer Jersey Joe Walcott; and

4 WHEREAS, Keith Kelley paused his minor league career to  
5 join the Air Force, where he was assigned to the special  
6 services division and played baseball and basketball; his  
7 baseball team won the 1956 Northern Japan League title, the  
8 315th Airborne Division tournament, and the 1956 Far East Air  
9 Force Tournament, which qualified the team for the World  
10 Baseball Championship in South Carolina; he hit .380 with 34  
11 home runs that season; and

12 WHEREAS, After his military service, Keith Kelley returned  
13 to the Dodgers farm system, playing briefly in 1956 for Great  
14 Falls, Montana at the Class C level; he then went to work as a  
15 mail sorter in Peoria's downtown post office for 17 years and  
16 later worked at the Peoria Journal Star, where he spent 28  
17 years as a circulation department assistant manager; and

18 WHEREAS, Keith Kelley died in August 2007 at the age of 75;  
19 he had four sons, Frank (deceased), Ken, Gregory, and Don; he  
20 left behind a large family, including 20 grandchildren and 20  
21 great-grandchildren; therefore, be it

22 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE

1 HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
2 we declare June 11, 2023 as "Keith Kelley Day" in the State of  
3 Illinois; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
5 presented to the family of Keith Kelley.