



Legislation Text

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Urging the Pro Football Hall of Fame's Selection Committee to elect Johnny Sample as a member, in recognition of his legacy as a pioneering athlete, broadcaster, and activist.

WHEREAS, Johnny Sample first rose to prominence for his prowess on the football field. A graduate of Overbrook High School, he went on to star as a running back at Maryland State College, now known as University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Over four years, he led the team to two Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association championships and was named an All-American three times. In recognition of his excellence, he was ultimately selected for the Black College Football Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sample continued to shine over an 11-year career in professional football, playing on both defense and special teams. He is the only player in history to win an NFL championship, an AFL championship, and a Super Bowl, three of the most memorable games every played. He started in all three and had an interception in Super Bowl III. He starred alongside numerous NFL legends, including quarterback Joe Namath, who was his co-captain on the New York Jets. Contemporaries remember him as uniquely intimidating, both physically and psychologically. Notably, his career ended abruptly in his prime, when he was cut by the Jets after starring in their Super Bowl III victory; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sample also left a lasting mark on professional football off the field. He was unapologetically outspoken about the unequal treatment of players of color, including disparities in compensation. He was a dedicated union member and sued the NFL multiple times. He was credited in the *New York Times* as the NFL's first "trash talker." But his broadcasting colleague Tom Cardella wrote in the *South Philly Review* that, despite the "fire in his belly," Mr. Sample had a "thoughtful, gentle side." Indeed, he was an insightful thinker and mentored luminaries like Brian Dawkins and Bernard Hopkins, along with countless lesser-known athletes and non-athletes alike; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sample continued to excel in retirement, becoming a standout tennis player, earning a top ranking for players over 45 from the U.S. Tennis Association. He also served as an official at major professional tournaments. Perhaps most memorably, he pursued his love of tennis as a youth tennis pioneer, establishing the nation's largest urban youth tennis program and mentoring young stars including Serena and Venus Williams. He and his fellow youth sports legend, Sonny Hill, were close friends and regularly teamed up for community service efforts like door-to-door Thanksgiving turkey giveaways; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Sample becoming a pioneering sports broadcaster and talk radio host, including for Philadelphia stations WHAT and WYSP. He mentored an entire generation of sports broadcasters and journalists, particularly in Philadelphia and within the African-American journalism community. He famously used his platform to advocate for community causes and social justice. One of his proudest moments was organizing 73 buses from the Philadelphia region for the Million Man March in Washington, DC; and

WHEREAS, The above contributions to the game of football, the Philadelphia region, the African-American community, and humanity at large are deeply deserving of greater recognition; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Pro Football Hall of Fame's Selection Committee is urged to elect Johnny Sample as a

member, in recognition of his legacy as a pioneering athlete, broadcaster, and activist.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the surviving family members of Johnny Sample as evidence of this Body's esteem for him and his legacy.