



Legislation Text

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Recognizing and honoring the life of “The Greatest of All Time” Muhammad Ali, who passed away Friday, June 3, 2016 at the age of 74 after a 32-year battle with Parkinson’s disease.

WHEREAS, Muhammad Ali, formerly known as Cassius Marcellus Clay, took up the sport of boxing when he was 12, winning Golden Gloves titles before his trip to Rome for the 1960 Olympics, where he won a gold medal as a light heavyweight; and

WHEREAS, Muhammad Ali won the world heavyweight boxing championship in 1964 and again twice during the 1970s, winning famed bouts against Sonny Liston, Joe Frazier and George Foreman along the way; and

WHEREAS, As his career and public profile rose, Muhammad Ali acted out against American racism and devoted his life to humanitarian causes, fighting for world peace, equal rights, religious liberty, divisive issues of politics, hunger relief, and cross-cultural understanding. His unyielding stance on prevailing topics of justice and equality reverberated in communities across the nation; and

WHEREAS, Muhammad Ali was also famous for his courageous fights outside of the ring; in April of 1967, during the Vietnam War, he was drafted into the military and refused to serve on the grounds that he was a practicing Muslim minister with religious beliefs that prevented him from fighting; as a result he was arrested for committing a felony and almost immediately stripped of his world title and boxing license; and

WHEREAS, Following his arrest, the U.S. Department of Justice initiated a lawsuit against Muhammad Ali where he was found guilty of violating Selective Service laws and was sentenced to five years in prison. Nonetheless, Ali continued denouncing the war and appealed his case to the Supreme Court in 1971, which ultimately overturned his conviction in a unanimous 8-0 decision; and

WHEREAS, Muhammad Ali retired from the sport of boxing in 1981, with a record of 56 wins with 37 knockouts and five losses. In 1984, after announcing that he suffered from Parkinson’s Disease, Muhammad Ali solely devoted his time to philanthropy, opened the Muhammad Ali Parkinson Center and supported many organizations such as the Special Olympics and the Make-A-Wish Foundation; and

WHEREAS, In addition to lighting the Olympic cauldron at the Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996, he was also chosen in 1998 to be a United Nations Messenger of Peace given his work in developing nations; and

WHEREAS, Along with earning the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2005 from President George W. Bush, on September 13, 2012, on the 225th Anniversary of the Constitution at the National Constitution Center on Independence Mall in Philadelphia, Muhammad Ali was awarded the 2012 Liberty Medal for his embodiment of the constitutional ideals of freedom, self-governance, equality, and empowerment while pushing us as a people and as a nation to be better; and

WHEREAS, Ali’s actions and continued protest, rooted in anti-war sentiments and racial inequality, inspired countless African Americans from the civil rights era into our modern day. His tremendous spirit and social

activism has left a permanent, positive impact across our communities both in Philadelphia, a City he once called home, and throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, Although the revered athlete and civil rights champion passed away on June 3, 2016, he will not only be universally regarded as one of the greatest boxers in history but will also be remembered for his unwavering courage and willingness to speak out and challenge the status quo; now, therefore, be it,

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby recognizes and honors Muhammad Ali, “The Greatest of All Time”, who passed away Friday, June 3, 2016 at the age of 74 after a 32-year battle with Parkinson’s disease.