

Legislation Text

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Adding “Muhammad Ali Way” to the street signs on 52nd Street between Parkside and Paschall Avenues in recognition of “The Greatest”, the Athlete, Boxer, Philanthropist and Social Activist.

WHEREAS, Born Cassius Clay Jr. in Louisville, Kentucky, on January 17, 1942. At a young age, Ali starting working with Joe Martin, a police officer, to learn how to spar, thus, beginning his lifelong relationship with boxing; and

WHEREAS, At 6’3” he had a domineering stature in the ring, but he was also known for his fancy footwork and lightning speed. In 1960, Muhammad Ali became an Olympic Gold Medalist, defeating Zbigniew Pietrkowski from Poland to the winning title; and

WHEREAS, After his Olympic victory, Ali turned to professional boxing. In 1964 he knocked out Sonny Liston to become the heavyweight champion of the world; and

WHEREAS, In 1964, Ali converted to Islam, and officially changed his named from Cassius Clay to Muhammad Ali. He became more outspoken about his views opposing the Vietnam War. When Ali was drafted in 1967, he refused to serve on the grounds that his religious beliefs prevented him from fighting. He was immediately arrested for committing a felony and was stripped of his world title and boxing license. He was eventually convicted and sentenced to five years in prison; and

WHEREAS, In 1971, the Supreme Court overturned Ali’s conviction, allowing him to officially return to the boxing ring. That year, Ali took on Joe Frazier in what was called the “Fight of the Century”. Frazier defeated Ali in the 15th round, resulting in Ali’s first professional loss after 31 wins. However, in 1974 Ali came back and defeated Frazier in a rematch; and

WHEREAS, In 1974, Ali fought against George Foreman in another legendary match called the “Rumble in the Jungle”. Ali was seen as the underdog in this fight against a younger and bigger George Foreman. However, Ali managed to wear his opponent down by baiting him into throwing wild punches with his “rope-a-dope” technique, and then masterfully finished off the match by knocking Foreman out in the 8th round, reclaiming his heavyweight title; and

WHEREAS, In retirement, Ali devoted much of his time to philanthropy. In 1984, he announced that he was battling Parkinson’s Disease. Over the years he supported many organizations, such as the Special Olympics and the Make a Wish Foundation; and

WHEREAS, In 1996, Ali was given the honor of lighting the Olympic Cauldron at the Summer Games in Atlanta. It marked a momentous occasion in sports history; and

WHEREAS, In 2005, Ali received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President George W. Bush. That same year he opened the Muhammad Ali Center in Louisville, Kentucky saying that he “wanted a place that would inspire people to be the best that they could be at whatever they chose to do”; and

WHEREAS, Ali passed away on the evening of June 3, 2016. His memorial service was a three day event celebrating the life of a legend. Millions of fans mourned his loss and people from all over the world felt the impact of his passing. In the end, history will always remember Ali as “the Greatest,” a fierce fighter that stood strong in the face of injustice; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE PHILADELPHIA CITY COUNCIL, Hereby adds “Muhammad Ali Way” to the street signs on 52nd Street between Parkside and Paschall Avenues in recognition of “The Greatest”, the Athlete, Boxer, Philanthropist and Social Activist.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Muhammad Ali as a sincere expression of the Philadelphia City Council’s gratitude and recognition.