

HR74 INTRODUCED



1 HR74
2 FKA11C5-1
3 By Representatives Sellers, Givan, Datcher, Tillman, Rafferty,
4 Hendrix, Hollis
5 RFD:
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HR_____ CELEBRATING THE CENTENARY OF REVEREND WILLIAM HENRY GREASON.

WHEREAS, with special pleasure, we offer joyful felicitations to Reverend William Henry "Bill" Greason, who is celebrating his milestone 100th birthday; and

WHEREAS, Bill Greason was born on September 3, 1924, in Atlanta, Georgia; the middle child of James and Lizi Greason's five children, he grew up across the street from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on Auburn Avenue, now known as the Sweet Auburn Historic District, which was an African American neighborhood in segregated Atlanta; and

WHEREAS, in 1943, he entered the United States Marine Corps during World War II and completed basic training at Montford Point in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; he served honorably with the 66th Supply Platoon, an all-Black unit, in the Pacific Theater of Operations, where he took part in the Battle of Iwo Jima; and

WHEREAS, after the war, Bill Greason enjoyed a distinguished career as a baseball player; he was an ace right-handed pitcher for the Birmingham Black Barons from 1948 to 1950, where he was a teammate of Willie Mays; in 1948, he won two games in the playoffs against the Kansas City Monarchs, helping the Black Barons win the Negro American League pennant; and against the Homestead Grays, in



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29 the last Negro League World Series ever played, he defeated
30 the soon-to-be champion to claim Birmingham's lone victory
31 in the five-game series; and

32 WHEREAS, Bill Greason later pitched for the St. Louis
33 Cardinals, where he would become the team's second African
34 American player; he went on to play eight years in the high
35 minors, and retired after the 1959 season; and

36 WHEREAS, after his baseball days, Bill Greason
37 studied for the ministry at Birmingham Baptist Bible College
38 and Samford University; he became a member of the 16th
39 Street Baptist Church, where he met his beloved wife, Willie
40 Otis Underwood, whom he married in 1953 and remained devoted
41 to until her passing in 2018; in 1971, he was called as the
42 pastor of Birmingham's historic Bethel Baptist Church, and
43 he continued to preach into 2023; and

44 WHEREAS, in 2011, Bill Greason was presented with a
45 lifetime achievement award at the annual Alabama Black
46 Achievement Awards Gala; in 2012, the Montford Point
47 Marines, including Reverend Greason, were awarded a group
48 Congressional Gold Medal; and

49 WHEREAS, at 100 years of age, he is the oldest living
50 veteran of the Negro Leagues; in 2020, the players who
51 played in the Negro Leagues from 1920 to 1948 were
52 recognized as official Major Leaguers, with their stats and
53 records becoming a part of Major League History; and

54 WHEREAS, by achieving success on the baseball field,
55 African-American baseball players, such as Reverend Bill
56 Greason, helped break down color barriers and integrate



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57 African-Americans into all aspects of society in the United
58 States; and

59 WHEREAS, as a U.S. Marine, pioneering baseball
60 player, civil rights activist, pastor, husband, father, and
61 grandfather, Reverend Greason is a quintessential American;
62 he has said that he has no regrets and thanks God for the
63 direction of his life; now therefore,

64 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
65 LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA, That Reverend Bill Greason is hereby
66 celebrated for reaching his milestone 100th birthday, and we
67 commend him for his many lifetime achievements, commitments,
68 sacrifices, and contributions to baseball, his community,
69 and our country; we joyfully dedicate this resolution to him
70 with utmost gratitude and admiration, along with sincere
71 wishes for many more happy and healthy birthdays to come.