

## CHAPTER 47

(House Bill 84)

AN ACT concerning

### **State Government – Commemorative Days – Negro Baseball League**

FOR the purpose of requiring the Governor to proclaim annually the second Saturday in May as Negro Baseball League Day; making this Act an emergency measure; and generally relating to commemorative days.

BY adding to

Article – State Government

Section 13–408

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2004 Replacement Volume and 2008 Supplement)

#### Preamble

WHEREAS, African Americans played baseball throughout the 1800s and began playing on professional teams in the late 1800s; and

WHEREAS, African American baseball players were willing to travel almost anywhere and play a nearly unlimited amount of games for little compensation just to get the chance to play top-level baseball; and

WHEREAS, Professional Negro baseball leagues afforded the best African American players a chance to play baseball against each other; and

WHEREAS, Maryland hosted a number of professional African American teams, including the Snow Hill Nine, the Pocomoke City Giants, the Denton Blue Sox, and the Crisfield Giants of the Colored Baseball League of the Eastern Shore, other teams in Annapolis and on the Eastern Shore, the Mitchellville Tigers, the Rockville ACs, the Yokeley All-Stars, the Washington Black Sox, and Maryland's two most prominent teams, the Baltimore Black Sox and the Baltimore Elite (pronounced "EE-light") Giants; and

WHEREAS, In the 1940s, the Eastern Shore League, a thriving Class D professional baseball league that existed on Maryland's Eastern Shore, excluded African American players; and

WHEREAS, As a result, the Delmarva Peninsula had a Negro league of its own, and the only remaining baseball stadium on the Shore from that era and one of the

few Negro league baseball stadiums remaining in the country still stands in Oakville, Maryland today; and

WHEREAS, The Shore also produced the first African American player to be admitted to the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame as well as the first black coach in Major League Baseball, William Julius “Judy” Johnson from Snow Hill; and

WHEREAS, The State also produced Leon Day, a flame-throwing right-handed pitcher with a no-windup delivery who grew up in southwest Baltimore, who watched and then played for the Baltimore Black Sox, and later helped lead the Baltimore Elite Giants to the Eastern Colored League pennant before his eventual induction into the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, Another Marylander, Ernest Burke from Havre De Grace, pitched and played outfield for the Baltimore Elite Giants after becoming one of the first African Americans to serve in the Marines during World War II; and

WHEREAS, Hubert “Bert” Van Wyke Simmons pitched and played outfield for the Baltimore Elite Giants before living in Woodlawn, taught in Baltimore City, and coached baseball at Dunbar and Northwestern High Schools; and

WHEREAS, The Baltimore Black Sox, charter members of the Eastern Colored League in 1923 that showcased a “million dollar infield” in 1929 because the press thought they would have been paid that much if the players had been white, won the American Negro League Championship in 1929 before disbanding in 1934; and

WHEREAS, The Baltimore Elite Giants, whose players included Major League Baseball Hall of Fame catcher Roy Campanella, came to Baltimore in 1938 and won the Negro National Title in 1939 and 1949; and

WHEREAS, The Negro baseball leagues, thanks in part to their Maryland roots, afforded a place for the best black baseball players to play professionally, and helped baseball grow into the national pastime; and

WHEREAS, In 2009, at the 60, 70, and 80 year anniversaries of Baltimore’s Negro League baseball championships, it is appropriate to give due recognition to the Negro baseball leagues, their players, and their fans; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

### **Article – State Government**

**13-408.**

**THE GOVERNOR ANNUALLY SHALL PROCLAIM THE SECOND SATURDAY IN MAY AS NEGRO BASEBALL LEAGUE DAY.**

~~SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2009.~~

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act is an emergency measure, is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health or safety, has been passed by a yea and nay vote supported by three-fifths of all the members elected to each of the two Houses of the General Assembly, and shall take effect from the date it is enacted.

**Approved by the Governor, April 14, 2009.**