

## Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Signs Joint Resolution Establishing July 5th as Larry Doby Day

07/5/2023

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy today signed a joint resolution (AJR221) designating July 5<sup>th</sup> of each year as Larry Doby Day. This day of recognition honors the incredible legacy of Lawrence “Larry” Eugene Doby, a pioneer in the desegregation of professional baseball in the United States.

A New Jersey native, Larry Doby began his athletic career playing baseball, basketball, football, and running varsity track at Eastside High School in Paterson. His success as a baseball player on the Newark Eagles earned him attention from professional teams, which at the time were limited to white men only. On July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1947, Doby joined the Cleveland Indians and became the first African American baseball player in the American League. Today marks the 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Doby breaking the color barrier in Major League Baseball.

“We are extremely proud of Larry Doby’s legacy and the impact his life has had on our nation’s history,” **said Governor Murphy**. “As our national pastime, the sport of baseball holds an important place in American culture and history, and its desegregation is a significant chapter of the civil rights movement. Establishing this day in Larry Doby’s honor creates an annual opportunity to evaluate our effort to continue his fight for equality and to express our gratitude and admiration for his courage.”

“First, I want to thank Senator Ruiz, Senator Pou, Assemblyman Wimberly, and Assemblywoman Sumter for their effort in honoring my father,” **said Larry Doby Jr.** “I would also like to thank Governor Murphy for signing the bill and making this possible. As a family, we are extremely proud and humbled by this honor.”

Primary Sponsors of SJR118 include Senators Teresa Ruiz and Nellie Pou, and Assemblymembers Benjie E. Wimberly and Shavonda Sumter.

“Larry Doby rose out of the working classes of Paterson to become an American icon, and role model, facing all forms of hate and bigotry along the way,” **said Senate Majority Leader Ruiz**. “His determination to rise above it, and along with Jackie Robinson to break major league baseball’s color barrier, set a living example that endures nearly 80 years later, and paved the way for generations of young people who dream of playing professional sports. After his retirement, he lived out his days in Montclair where he continued to be a powerful figure in the community.”

“Like Jackie Robinson, Paterson’s Larry Doby endured all manner of racism and discrimination – from white players, fans and even teammates. He was not allowed to sleep in the same hotels or eat at the same restaurants as white players. Yet through it all, he persevered with class and dignity, becoming one of the all-time stars of our national pastime,” **said Senator Pou**. “This resolution will help make sure Larry Doby’s name and remarkable achievements are never forgotten.”

“Larry Doby’s Major League Baseball career transcended beyond entertainment and will forever live on in our nation’s history,” **said Assemblyman Wimberly**. “As the second black baseball player to play in the major leagues, he broke down barriers and left his mark on African-American history. It is fitting that we commemorate Larry Doby with a day in his honor.”

“Larry Doby was an extraordinary athlete and a pioneer in the desegregation of professional baseball,” **said Assemblywoman Sumter**. “An example for all youth, Larry Doby demonstrated dignity and grace in the face of adversity. We must continue to honor his contributions to our state and keep the memory of his tenacity and courage alive.”

Doby’s talent left an indelible impact on both the baseball community and the ongoing fight against racism. He was elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1998 and was posthumously honored by Congress for his contributions to the advancement of civil rights. Today, a life-sized bronze statue of the baseball star stands just outside of the Cleveland Guardians’ Progressive Field.

Following his retirement, Doby returned to New Jersey to raise his children in Montclair, as well as work in community relations for the NBA on behalf of the New Jersey Nets. The City of Paterson has since renamed Eastside Park’s baseball field to “Larry Doby Field”.

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