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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-5400**

January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Robert D. Manfred  
Commissioner of Baseball  
Major League Baseball  
1271 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, NY 10020

Dear Commissioner Manfred:

I write to respectfully request your consideration to universally retire number 21, Roberto Clemente's uniform number.

As the right fielder for the Pittsburgh Pirates, Clemente, a native of Puerto Rico, emerged as one of professional baseball's greatest stars. The on-field achievements of late Puerto Rican-born legend known as "Arriba" and "The Great One" are many. In his 18 seasons with the Pirates, Clemente garnered 3,000 hits, won two Major League Baseball World Series Championships, was named World Series Most Valuable Player (MVP), and was a 15-time All-Star. He was awarded 12 straight Gold Gloves, won the National League batting title four times, was the leader in hits twice, the leader in triples once, and was once named National League MVP. Clemente was the first Latin American and Caribbean player to help win a World Series as a starting position player, to receive a National League MVP Award, and to receive a World Series MVP Award. In recognition of this, he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame by special election in 1973, that as you know waived the mandatory five-year waiting period. Thus, Clemente became the first Latin American and Caribbean player to be enshrined in Cooperstown.

Clemente's contributions went far beyond the field.

He was also celebrated for his selfless humanitarianism. On December 31, 1972, he was killed in an airplane crash off the waters of Puerto Rico. He was on a humanitarian mission to Nicaragua to deliver supplies to victims of the 1972 earthquake that struck the capital, Managua. When he heard that the people of Nicaragua were not receiving the aid that the people of Puerto Rico had sent, he insisted on accompanying the next planeload, to make sure that aid was reaching the over-250,000 people that were left homeless as a result of the natural disaster. In 1995, Clemente was inducted into the World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame.

Clemente was not only committed to humanitarian work, but also had a social consciousness as he fought for social justice during the contentious civil rights movement. As a black Puerto Rican, Roberto endured racial, cultural, and language discrimination in time when he was ridiculed by

the press for his accent or even when he was separated from his Pirates teammates in the segregated South, notwithstanding that he had proudly served this Country as a Marine from 1958 to 1964. He frequently stood up for himself and his fellow Latino players, speaking out against injustices he saw. Clemente actually convinced some of his teammates to protest playing the Pirates' home opener on April 8, 1968 because of Dr. King's funeral, which caused the game to be postponed to April 10.


Clemente was posthumously awarded the Roberto Clemente Walker Congressional Gold Medal, the highest award bestowed by the United States Congress to honor those who have performed an achievement that had a major impact on American history and culture. President Nixon posthumously bestowed upon him the Presidential Citizens Medal, the second-highest civilian award bestowed by the President of the United States to recognize those American citizens who have performed exemplary deeds or services for his or her country or fellow citizens. Subsequently, President Bush posthumously awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award in the United States, which recognizes those people who have made an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors. The Marine Corps honored him as well by inducting him into the Marine Corps Sports Hall of Fame in 2003.

Every September, Major League Baseball celebrates Roberto Clemente Day. Every year, the player who "best exemplifies the game of baseball, sportsmanship, community involvement and the individual's contribution to his team" is given the Roberto Clemente Award. Currently three teams have retired No. 21, including the Pirates, the Atlanta Braves, and the Cleveland Indians. It is time that Major League Baseball follows their example, and honors this exemplary ballplayer

As the sole representative of Puerto Rico in Congress, I am obliged to support the recognition of this Puerto Rican athlete, and humanitarian, who transcended the baseball field, setting an example for the world to follow. I urge you to do the same and universally retire Roberto Clemente's number 21 in order to honor his exemplary lifetime service.

I thank you for your consideration of this matter. Should you have any questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to contact my Washington, D.C. Office at 202-225-2615.

Sincerely,



Jenniffer A. González Colón  
Member of Congress