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JOINT RESOLUTION MEMORIALIZING Certain National Private Entities to Honor Maine Baseball Great Louis Sockalexis and to Afford Appropriate Respect to Native American Athletes

WE, your Memorialists, the Members of the One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Legislature of the State of Maine now assembled in the First Regular Session, most respectfully present and petition the professional American League baseball team, the Cleveland Indians, the National Baseball Hall of Fame and the national magazine Sports Illustrated as follows:

WHEREAS, Louis Sockalexis was a Penobscot Indian from the State of Maine, a grandson of a Penobscot chief and the son of a Penobscot tribal governor, and he was a legendary American baseball player in the early 1890s; and

WHEREAS, Louis Sockalexis is a charter member of the College of the Holy Cross Athletic Hall of Fame, a member the Maine Baseball Hall of Fame, a member of the Maine Sports Hall of Fame and the American Indian Hall of Fame for his extraordinary athletic gifts; and

WHEREAS, Louis Sockalexis was so explosive a force on the baseball diamond that he inspired Maine author Gilbert Patten to create a legendary fictional baseball character, Frank Merriwell of Yale, for stories published in a national magazine, and Mr. Sockalexis played in 2 baseball seasons for the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts; and

WHEREAS, Louis Sockalexis was the first known American Indian to play major league baseball, playing in the 1897 season, and is, without question, the inspiration for the team name Indians, first adopted informally by the Cleveland major league franchise in March 1897 and then officially adopted in 1915; and

WHEREAS, the Cleveland Indians team ignored a petition by the Penobscot Nation in 2000 to cease and desist the use of its caricature mascot "Chief Wahoo," which the Penobscot Nation and many other Americans consider racist and disrespectful to the memory of Louis Sockalexis; and

WHEREAS, in 1963 Baseball Hall of Fame writer Lee Allen declared another player, James Madison Toy, to be the first American Indian major league baseball player, yet there is no proof of the other man's Indian background, while Mr. Sockalexis was continuously identified as an American Indian from the beginning of his career; and

WHEREAS, James Madison Toy was never referred to in his career as an Indian and his death certificate declared him to be "white," and Louis Sockalexis was known nationally as an Indian and was subjected to racism from the media, the fans and his fellow players; and

WHEREAS, being the first American Indian baseball player who performed under such conditions 50 years before the great Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier, Louis Sockalexis paved

the way for the quick ascension of more American Indian baseball players to the sport, such as Charlie Bender, John Meyers and Jim Thorpe; and

WHEREAS, the national magazine Sports Illustrated omitted Louis Sockalexis from its "50 Greatest Athletes from the State of Maine" and ignored his place in Maine history, United States history and baseball history; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED: That We, your Memorialists, on behalf of the people we represent, take this opportunity to honor Louis Sockalexis as one of Maine's greatest athletes, who brought much pride to the Penobscot Nation and to all the people of Maine; and be it further

RESOLVED: That We, your Memorialists, respectfully urge and request that the Cleveland Indians baseball team immediately drop the use of the mascot "Chief Wahoo," which would demonstrate the team understands the disrespect this symbol represents to the Penobscot Nation, the citizens of Maine and the legacy of Louis Sockalexis; and be it further

RESOLVED: That We, your Memorialists, respectfully urge and request the National Baseball Hall of Fame to formally recognize Louis Sockalexis as the first American Indian to play major league baseball, to acknowledge that he was the man who inspired the team name "Indians" for the Cleveland franchise and to acknowledge that Louis Sockalexis endured groundbreaking experiences in baseball and faced major obstacles in his quest to play baseball, paving the way for other great American Indian players like Charlie Bender, John Meyers and Jim Thorpe who followed him into the major leagues; and be it further

RESOLVED: That We, your Memorialists, respectfully urge and request that the magazine Sports Illustrated correct the mistake of leaving both Louis Sockalexis and his cousin Andrew Sockalexis, a marathon runner who placed highly in 2 Boston Marathons and the 1912 Olympics, off its list of the "50 Greatest Athletes from the State of Maine," and to apologize for these actions, which would demonstrate its goodwill and respect for these two extraordinary American Indian athletes; and be it further

RESOLVED: That suitable copies of this resolution, duly authenticated by the Secretary of State, be transmitted to the Cleveland Indians baseball team, the National Baseball Hall of Fame and the magazine Sports Illustrated.