



REPRESENTATIVE MARK ROMANCHUK
HOUSE DISTRICT 2

REPRESENTATIVE SCOTT WIGGAM
HOUSE DISTRICT 1

HB 229 | To Designate February 3rd as “Charles Follis Day”
House Committee on State and Local Government
Sponsor Testimony
May 31, 2017

Thank you, Chairman Anielski, Vice Chair Hambley, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 229. This legislation, which unanimously passed out of the House last GA, designates the third day of February as “Charles Follis Day” in honor of the first African American professional football player who was born on that day in Wayne County in 1879 and played for the Shelby Blues in Richland County.

Charles Follis, who earned the name "The Black Cyclone" as a football star in Wooster in 1901, is known for his many accomplishments on the field. Charles' faith, perseverance and charisma stood out among his teammates and all who met him. During an era when Ohio was still struggling with how to recover in the shadow of the Civil War and wrestling with racism and tolerance issues, Charles stood out among men through the brotherhood of sports and made an impression on all who encountered him. He later befriended and inspired the legendary Branch Rickey who broke the race barrier in the modern MLB by signing Jackie Robinson.

Charles received numerous recognitions from many organizations, including The NFL Hall of Fame, the City of Shelby, which recognized him with a proclamation from their City Council, and Wooster High School, which named their high school stadium "Follis Field." We are pleased to be a part of the process to honor the memory and life of Charles Follis as the first African American Professional football player.

After Rep. Wiggam shares a few words, we would be happy to answer any questions.