

Committees:

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Chair Willia, Vice Chair Daniels, Ranking Member Grim, and esteemed Members of the House Transportation Committee,

I am honored to stand alongside my colleague, Rep. Justin Puzzulli, in asking this committee's support for our bill to designate a portion of Ohio State Route 125 in Scioto County as "Al Oliver Highway." This legislation pays homage not only to athletic prowess but also to the indomitable spirit and enduring legacy of a hometown hero.

Albert Oliver Jr., born on October 14, 1946, in Portsmouth, Ohio, epitomizes the American dream. Raised by loving parents, Albert Sr. and Sallie Jane, Al was instilled with values of humility and self-assurance from a young age. His upbringing in the close-knit community of Portsmouth, where the church served as a cornerstone, laid the foundation for his extraordinary journey.

From his early days as a child bouncing a ball to his illustrious career as a multi-sport athlete at Portsmouth High School, Al Oliver's path to greatness was marked by unwavering determination and undeniable talent. Despite early setbacks, including a knee injury that threatened his baseball aspirations, Al persevered with unwavering faith in his abilities.

Upon joining the Pittsburgh Pirates, Al swiftly established himself as a mainstay in the lineup, showcasing exceptional hitting prowess and earning the moniker "Scoop" for his defensive brilliance at first base. His on-field accomplishments, including multiple All-Star selections and a pivotal role in the Pirates' 1971 World Series triumph, solidified his status as one of the game's premier players.

Yet, Al's impact extended beyond the baseball diamond. Throughout his career, he confronted adversity with grace and fortitude, navigating instances of racism and discrimination with resilience and dignity. As he eloquently stated, "There's no such thing as bragging. You're either lying or telling the truth." This sentiment encapsulates Al's character as both a person and a sports figure—honest, principled, and steadfast in his convictions.

After wearing the uniforms of several teams, including the Texas Rangers, Montreal Expos, San Francisco Giants, Philadelphia Phillies, Los Angeles Dodgers, and Toronto Blue Jays, Al Oliver bid farewell to professional baseball. Yet, his legacy endures, not only in the annals of the sport but also in the hearts of those inspired by his remarkable journey.

The designation of State Route 125 as “Al Oliver Highway” is a fitting tribute to a hometown hero who defied the odds to achieve greatness. It stands as a testament to the power of perseverance, the importance of community, and the enduring impact of one man's extraordinary legacy.

Thank you to this committee for considering this legislation, which honors the enduring legacy of Al Oliver and celebrates the rich heritage of Portsmouth, Ohio.

I will now turn it over to my colleague, Rep. Pizzulli, for give additional remarks.