

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 28, 2021

Jane Forbes Clark
Chair of the Board
Major League Baseball Hall of Fame
25 Main Street
Cooperstown, NY 13326

Dear Chairman Clark:

Last year, over 100 Members of Congress wrote to you to express their strong support for Curt Flood's nomination and induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame. We understand that as a result of uncertainties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board of Directors unanimously voted to postpone the work of the Golden Days Era Committee until 2021. Today, we again write to encourage the Historical Overview Committee to add Curt Flood's name to the ballot of candidates that will be considered by the Golden Days Era Committee for admission to the Hall of Fame when the Committee reconvenes this December. We strongly believe that Curt Flood has earned his place in the Baseball Hall of Fame.

In your response to our letter dated February 27, 2020, former Hall of Fame President Tim Mead noted that it is extremely difficult to gain admission to the Hall of Fame; only 1% of all players have earned this honor. We believe that Mr. Flood's legacy is more profound than many of his colleagues who are already enshrined at Cooperstown; he sacrificed his own career so that future players would be afforded more rights and better compensation during the course of their careers.

Mr. Flood was a two-time World Series Champion, three-time All Star, and seven-time consecutive Golden Glove Award winner, but arguably his greatest contribution to professional baseball happened off the field. Mr. Flood's courageous actions made Major League Baseball (MLB) what it is today by paving the way for free agency. There would be no more fitting time to enshrine Mr. Flood into the Hall of Fame than during the 50th anniversary of his courageous court challenge to the reserve system, which helped transform professional sports.

After playing 12 seasons with the St. Louis Cardinals as a standout center fielder, Flood was traded to the Philadelphia Phillies in 1969, without any consultation from Cardinals management. Mr. Flood refused to be traded, becoming the first player in MLB history to reject a

trade. At the time, players were still bound to a team for life by the so-called “reserve clause.” Simply put, a player was a team's property. Mr. Flood demanded Baseball Commissioner Bowie Kuhn declare him a free agent in a letter dated Christmas Eve 1969. He wrote: “After twelve years in the major leagues, I do not feel I am a piece of property to be bought and sold irrespective of my wishes. I believe that any system which produces that result violates my basic rights as a citizen and is inconsistent with the laws of the United States and of the several States.”

Commissioner Kuhn denied Mr. Flood’s request, so he filed a lawsuit against the MLB. The case (Flood v. Kuhn) reached the Supreme Court in 1972. In a 5-3 ruling, the Court sided with the MLB and against Mr. Flood, affirming the legality of the “reserve clause,” and professional baseball’s immunity from antitrust laws. Mr. Flood paid a huge price both professionally and personally for this decision and was effectively black balled from the MLB after seven consecutive Golden Glove seasons.

In 1998, Congress would unanimously pass the Curt Flood Act, which was signed into law by President Bill Clinton. The law overrode parts of the 1922 Supreme Court ruling that exempted baseball from antitrust laws that applied to all other sports, creating a far more just system for subsequent MLB athletes.

Thanks to Mr. Flood’s courageous act to not accept a trade, and to the efforts of Major League Baseball Players Association Executive Director Marvin Miller, the reserve clause was eventually terminated in December 1975. While both Mr. Flood and Mr. Miller are directly responsible for the current free agency system that MLB players enjoy today, Mr. Miller was inducted into the MLB Hall of Fame for his work on behalf of players and the League, yet Mr. Flood still lacks the same recognition.

The effects of Mr. Flood’s actions are still felt today. In December of 2019, MLB superstar Gerrit Cole praised Mr. Flood during a press conference in which Cole celebrated his new \$324 million dollar contract with the Yankees: “I want everybody to know, because challenging the reserve clause was one of the first stepping stones to ultimately the system we have today, which I believe brings out the most competitive, you know, genuine competitiveness, that we have in baseball.”

The past year has shown us the importance of acknowledging and celebrating the achievements of people of color, especially when their contributions to society have been largely overlooked. While we appreciate Mr. Flood’s prominence in the Hall of Fame’s museum and extensive archives, we believe that his actions merit a higher form of recognition. Mr. Flood exemplifies the American ideal: Standing up for what is right, regardless of the cost to oneself.

This is why we again strongly urge the Historical Overview Committee and Golden Days Era Committee to recognize Curt Flood's unprecedented courage and lasting effect on professional baseball by deservedly inducting him into the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

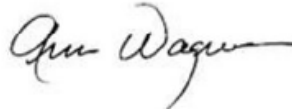
Mr. Flood's candidacy is supported by prominent current and former MLB players, seasoned sports writers, and baseball fans around the country. We respectfully request you give him the strongest possible consideration.

Cc: Members of the Historical Overview Committee
Members of the Golden Days Era Committee

Sincerely,



DAVID TRONE
Member of Congress



ANN WAGNER
Member of Congress



EMANUEL CLEAVER
Member of Congress



CORI BUSH
Member of Congress



ROY BLUNT
United States Senator



RICHARD J. DURBIN
United States Senator