

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Representative Xavier Becerra (CA – 31), whose congressional district includes Dodger Stadium, is co-sponsoring legislation that, if passed, would award a Congressional Gold Medal, the highest award a civilian American citizen can receive, to the late Jackie Robinson. The legislation also expresses the sense of Congress that there should be a national day of recognition in honor of the Hall of Fame baseball player whose actions on and off the baseball field are credited with having a profound influence on civil and human rights in America.

The legislation, which is authored by Reps. Richard Neal (MA – 2) and Peter King (NY – 3), is the companion bill to S.300, which was introduced February 4 by Senators John Kerry (MA) and John McCain (AZ).

Rep. Becerra issued the following statement today:

“Jackie Robinson remains one of the greatest heroes of the 20th Century. His fortitude and determination, combined with his natural athletic talent, propelled him past the racism present in this country in 1947 to become the first African American to play in Major League Baseball.

“But what stands out in my mind when I think of Jackie Robinson is not the fact that he is one of the greatest baseball players in history, though he most certainly is, but that he worked as hard off the field to ensure equality for all Americans, as he worked on the field to ensure equality in baseball. After his retirement in 1957, he went on to become a civil rights activist and a successful businessman, helping the NAACP raise funds, as well as having founded both the Freedom National Bank of Harlem in 1964 and the Jackie Robinson Construction Corporation in 1970. The mission of his entrepreneurial activities was first and foremost improving the living conditions of all African Americans.

“Jackie Robinson’s list of accomplishments is as impressive as it is long. He is not just a model baseball player – indeed, he is a model American. We as a country should do right by his contributions to the betterment of American society and honor him in a way fitting of this national hero. That way, future generations will be given the yearly opportunity to learn by his example.”