



Rep. Tom Emmer on Rep. Emmer speaks on the House floor in support of his Willie O'Ree Congressional Gold Medal Act

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****UNNAMED CONGRESSMAN:**

** Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield as much time as he may consume to a member of Congress who not only played collegiate hockey and is a hockey dad and spent over 20 years as a hockey coach, he's one of the best fans of the game of hockey in the United States Congress, the gentleman from Minnesota, Mr. Emmer.

****HOUSE SPEAKER:**

** Gentleman from Minnesota is recognized.

****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** Mr. Speaker, a little over the top. I rise today in support of S-452, the Willie O'Ree Congressional Gold Medal Act, and to recognize the incredible impact that Willie O'Ree has had on our great sport of hockey. Willie etched his name into the history books in 1958 when he became one of the select few, and it is a very few, who got called up from the minors to play for the National Hockey League in the National Hockey League for the Boston Bruins. Willie broke down racial barriers for sure. He would go on to play for more than 24 seasons as a professional hockey player despite facing countless challenges on and off the ice. But Willie O'Ree remains a trailblazer for many. But his contributions certainly did not end after his retirement from his playing career in 1979. As we've heard, in 1996 he became the NHL's diversity ambassador. In this capacity, he established the Hockey is for Everyone initiative to create a culture of inclusivity and provide an opportunity for disadvantaged children across this country and North America to play the game. His work continues even to this day to reinvigorate and grow the great sport of hockey while setting an example for underrepresented communities here at home and on an international level. As the NHL and teams across the country finally recognize Willie O'Ree's incredible contributions to hockey, today is Congress's opportunity to honor a true legend of the game that is loved and enjoyed by millions. Mr. Speaker, we know that hockey was given to us directly from God because it is played on ice, which can only exist in heaven. And I'm proud to co-lead this long-overdue effort and I urge all my colleagues in the House of Representatives to honor this icon of our God-given sport by voting yes on S-452. And I yield back.

****UNNAMED CONGRESSMAN:**

** Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.



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