



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** Res 0031-2022, **Version:** \*

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### Res. No. 31

Resolution calling upon the Commissioner of Major League Baseball to strip the Houston Astros and the Boston Red Sox of their respective 2017 and 2018 World Series titles.

By the Public Advocate (Mr. Williams) and Council Members Hanif, Cabán and Velázquez

Whereas, During the 2017 American League Championship Series, the New York Yankees lost to the Houston Astros; and

Whereas, This loss denied the Yankees advancement to the World Series and possibly winning their 28<sup>th</sup> title; and

Whereas, According to the Washington Post, who interviewed multiple baseball players and executives, people in the industry had held suspicions for years that the Astros were cheating during the 2017 and other seasons; and

Whereas, However, it was not until late 2019, when former Astros, and current Oakland A's pitcher, Mike Fiers confessed to journalists at The Athletic that his old team had engaged in cheating tactics throughout their 2017 season, that these rumors were realized; and

Whereas, Although decoding an opposing team's pitcher's signals to his catcher (known as 'sign stealing') is permitted in baseball, using modern technology to engage in this practice is a breach of baseball rules; and

Whereas, In August 2017, the Boston Red Sox were caught in the act of using information captured on their replay review camera to decode the sign and send this information to their team members in the dugout who were wearing smart watches; and

Whereas, In response, the Major League Baseball Commissioner put out a press release reiterating the rules regarding sign stealing; and

Whereas, In addition to fining the Red Sox, the press release clearly stated that the use of electronic equipment during games is prohibited and that this equipment shall not be “used for the purpose of stealing signs or conveying information designed to give a Club an advantage”; and

Whereas, In the Commissioner’s memorandum on the rules, issued the same day as the press release, he stated that all organizations were being put on notice that this issue was being taken very seriously and teams engaged in this kind of rule breaking would be held accountable; and

Whereas, Despite this warning, cheating by the Astros, and potentially the Red Sox, continued; and

Whereas, After The Athletic article featuring Mike Fiers was published, Major League Baseball (MLB) began an investigation into the Astros’ sign stealing methods, beginning in 2016; and

Whereas, The investigation ultimately uncovered a sophisticated and coordinated plan by the Astros to decode their opposition’s signs using video feed, which was then communicated to the batters through a series of coded bangs on nearby trashcans; and

Whereas, The investigation concluded that, even after the warning, triggered by the Red Sox’ behavior, was issued to each organization, “the Astros continued to both utilize the replay review room and the monitor located next to the dugout to decode signs for the remainder of the [2017] regular season and through the Postseason;” and

Whereas, As punishment for their rule-breaking, the Astros were fined \$5 million and were forced to forfeit their first and second round selections in the 2020 and 2021 First-Year Player Drafts; and

Whereas, Three team executives, Jeff Luhnow, A.J. Hinch, and Brandon Taubman, were also all suspended by the MLB; and

Whereas, The report into the investigation concluded that “virtually all of the Astros’ players had some

involvement or knowledge of the scheme,” considered it an unfair competitive edge and example of rule breaking, and thus tried to hide it from other teams; and

Whereas, However, the MLB ultimately decided not to discipline any players individually; and

Whereas, The only non-player who was determined to have knowingly participated in the cheating scheme was former Astros Bench Coach, Alex Cora; and

Whereas, The investigation found that Alex Cora helped to decode video from the replay room and assisted in developing the trashcan banging scheme; and

Whereas, The MLB Commissioner ultimately decided to withhold disciplinary action against Alex Cora because, at the time of releasing his report into the Astros cheating scheme, MLB was in the process of examining whether the Red Sox had also engaged in cheating during their 2018 World Series-winning season, while Alex Cora was their manager; and

Whereas, Baseball fans across the country were devastated to hear that their beloved game had been tarnished by cheating; and

Whereas, For Yankees’ fans and players, the findings were even more distressing because it made them ponder whether they had been cheated out of a World Series title; and

Whereas, It also seemed that the punishment handed out by MLB was lenient, especially given that the investigation concluded that all Astros players were involved in the scheme to some extent; and

Whereas, Some players and fans have called for MLB to vacate the World Series wins for both the Astros in 2017 and the Red Sox in 2018, based on the evidence of cheating; and

Whereas, By cheating to win, the World Series titles won by these two teams seem illegitimate; and

Whereas, As articulated by Yankee player Aaron Judge, “it doesn’t hold any value...you cheated. It wasn’t earned”; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the Commissioner of Major League

Baseball to strip the Houston Astros and the Boston Red Sox of their respective 2017 and 2018 World Series titles.

Session 12

JAB

LS #3944

1/7/22

Session 11

LS #13676

LMS