

Football star and Fremont native Charles Woodson celebrated at Statehouse

Bill introduced to rename section of US 20 bypass 'Charles Woodson Way'

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Fremont News-Messenger

March 10, 2021



COLUMBUS - Community leaders, family members and a group of Fremont Ross High School football players gave testimonials to Charles Woodson Wednesday, as State Rep. Gary Click held a press conference on a bill that would rename the U.S. 20 bypass after the Fremont native.

Click has introduced a bill that would change the road's name to Charles Woodson Way.

More: Fremont City Council supports naming US 20 bypass Charles Woodson Way

More: Matt Horn: Few players approach realm of Fremont's Woodson

Mayor Danny Sanchez spoke about the former Fremont Ross High School football standout at the Ohio Statehouse's atrium as Woodson looked on via a virtual video linkup.



Sanchez said only his parents made a bigger impact on his life than Woodson, for whom the mayor waited outside the locker room for a "high-five" when he played at Fremont Ross in the 1990s.

He recalled Woodson helping him to his father's car as a fifth grader after Sanchez broke his ankle in an accident at the Sandusky County YMCA.



"That memory has never gone away," Sanchez said, later calling Woodson the definition of perseverance as he achieved greatness on the football field.

The mayor said when people drive on the U.S. 20 bypass, he hoped they would be reminded of Woodson and what he accomplished in life.

Woodson, a former Fremont Ross High School standout, was elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame Class of 2021 in February.



Sanchez said the bypass section from the city's east side to the city limits on the west side would be renamed in Woodson's honor.

He said Woodson was more than just a football player and served as a community leader and mentor.



Woodson, a Heisman Trophy winner from Michigan, played in 254 games over 18 seasons, making a sudden impact as the defensive rookie of the year for the Packers, according to USA TODAY.

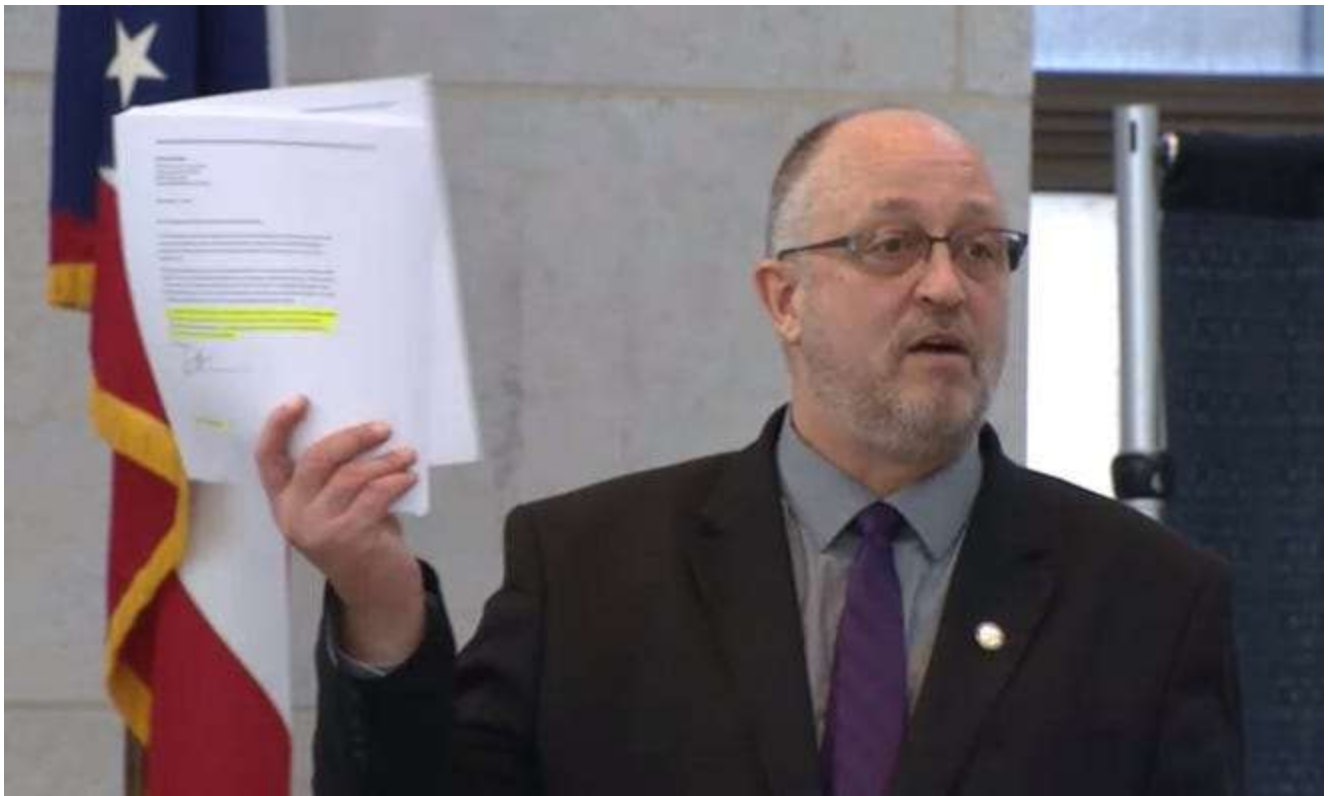
His 65 interceptions is tied for fifth in league history and includes at least one in each of his pro seasons. He led the NFL in interceptions twice, with nine in 2009 and seven in 2011.



Click said Woodson has not forgotten where he came from or his roots, which was important to the community, noting that the football star has a map of Ohio tattoo on his arm with a star marking Fremont's location.

Woodson's mother discovered the Fremont native had clubbed feet and Woodson was forced to wear braces for eight hours a day, Click said.

The Sandusky County legislator said Woodson overcame obstacles and turned them into opportunities.



Jon Detwiler, Fremont City Schools' superintendent, wore a "#2" on his purple mask in honor of Woodson.

He said Woodson's achievements were gained with no scandal or drama.

Three Fremont Ross football players read letters of support for renaming the bypass around Fremont.

Anthony Vann, a Fremont Ross sophomore, said he and other football players looked up to Woodson and credited him for paving the way for them.

"He also shows a lot of us what you can do when you give your all," Vann said.

Woodson was grateful for all those who spoke and participated at the Statehouse, including members of his family. He also gave words of encouragement to students at the event after discussing a story about his kindergarten teacher who gave him uplifting words: "that you are somebody special."

"All the kids in Fremont, just know, that you are somebody special and nobody here can take that away from you. But you have to believe that about yourself that you're special and I always believed that," Woodson said.

Click officially submitted the legislation honoring Woodson after the press conference with the local attendees.

A full video of the event can be watched at <http://ohiochannel.org/video/press-conference-designating-route-20-bypass-as-charles-woodson-way>.

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