
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 853 Session of
2014

INTRODUCED BY KAVULICH, FARINA, READSHAW, MAJOR, DONATUCCI,
SCAVELLO, KOTIK, KIRKLAND, HENNESSEY, MILLARD, THOMAS,
DIGIROLAMO, J. HARRIS, HAHN, NEILSON, BAKER, KINSEY,
CALTAGIRONE, McNEILL, BROWNLEE, JAMES, YOUNGBLOOD, LUCAS,
SCHLOSSBERG, PASHINSKI, EVERETT, MIRABITO, McCARTER, MATZIE,
WATSON, MAHONEY, DENLINGER, D. COSTA, COHEN, SAINATO AND
FLECK, MAY 7, 2014

INTRODUCED AS NONCONTROVERSIAL RESOLUTION UNDER RULE 35,
MAY 7, 2014

A RESOLUTION

1 Celebrating the lives of Francis James Keenan and Jarod
2 VonRueden and expressing condolences to their families upon
3 their untimely and tragic passing.

4 WHEREAS, Francis James Keenan, 28, of Clarks Summit and his
5 climbing partner, Jarod VonRueden, 22, of Clyman in Dodge
6 County, Wisconsin, began a climb to the top of the nearly
7 23,000-foot Mount Aconcagua in the Andes Mountain Range, the
8 highest peak in North and South America, on December 20, 2013;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, Mr. Keenan and Mr. VonRueden began their climb up
11 the Polish Glacier after qualifying for and receiving the
12 required permits; and

13 WHEREAS, Mr. Keenan and Mr. VonRueden reached the top of the
14 mountain, one of the famed Seven Summits, nearly four miles
15 above the Province of Mendoza in Argentina on December 31, 2013;

1 and

2 WHEREAS, Mr. Keenan and Mr. VonRueden began to make the climb
3 down when authorities received an alert from a rescue beacon
4 registered to Mr. VonRueden, prompting a search for the
5 climbers; and

6 WHEREAS, The search and rescue turned into a recovery mission
7 when a helicopter crew spied their bodies at the bottom of a
8 crevasse; and

9 WHEREAS, Authorities reasoned that bad weather led the
10 climbers to attempt to rappel down a cliff into camps lower down
11 the mountain; and

12 WHEREAS, Tragically, their climbing anchors failed to hold
13 them, causing them to fall together more than 600 feet to their
14 deaths; and

15 WHEREAS, Recovery crews could not reach the men's bodies
16 until the last week of February 2014 due to strong gales, bitter
17 cold and stormy weather coupled with the rarely used route taken
18 by the two climbers and the desire to put recovery crews in as
19 little danger as possible; and

20 WHEREAS, The unfortunate deaths occurred despite Mr. Keenan's
21 and Mr. VonRueden's being experienced climbers; and

22 WHEREAS, Mr. Keenan successfully summited Mount Rainier,
23 Mount Baker, Mount Adams and Mount Shuksan in the State of
24 Washington; Mount Shasta in the State of California; Mount
25 Cotopaxi, Mount Cayambe and Mount Chimborazo in Ecuador and
26 Mount Orizaba in Mexico; and

27 WHEREAS, Mr. VonRueden climbed Mount McKinley in the State of
28 Alaska, scaled various peaks in Ecuador, backpacked in China and
29 through the Grand Canyon and rode a bicycle from Wisconsin to
30 Montana; and

1 WHEREAS, Mr. Keenan was the son of Diane Lozinger-Keenan of
2 Clarks Summit and the late James Keenan, and graduated in 2003
3 from Abington Heights High School; and

4 WHEREAS, During his high school years, Mr. Keenan earned
5 membership in the National Honor Society and participated in
6 Rotary Leadership Camp, National History Day regional and State
7 competitions, Sons of the Union Veterans of the Civil War,
8 National Geographic Society, National Academy of Science,
9 marching band, student council and the Pennsylvania Gettysburg
10 Monuments Project; and

11 WHEREAS, Mr. Keenan's papers, as a part of his winning the
12 National History Day national, State and regional competitions,
13 focused on the military service of his family members, including
14 his grandfather, Edmund Carr in World War II; his father, James
15 Keenan in the United States Navy in the Philippines; and his
16 uncle, James Carr, who served in the United States Marines in
17 Vietnam; and

18 WHEREAS, Mr. Keenan further wrote an essay about his
19 grandfather's World War II experiences, which was published as
20 part of Tom Brokaw's book, "Hometown Heroes"; and

21 WHEREAS, Mr. Keenan received multiple honors, including a
22 personal letter of invitation from Admiral William J. Crowe, to
23 attend the National Youth Leadership Forum on Defense
24 Intelligence and Diplomacy in Washington, D.C.; and

25 WHEREAS, Mr. Keenan's interest and knowledge of history, as
26 well as his intellect and his academic achievement in writing
27 and research into the Civil War and participation in
28 reenactments and in the Pennsylvania Gettysburg Monuments
29 Project and other activities at the battlefield, prompted
30 Representative Harry Readshaw to invite him to give a

1 presentation about the Civil War; and

2 WHEREAS, Mr. Keenan, who was 13 years of age at the time,
3 spoke fluently and eloquently about the subject with no notes
4 for five minutes, prompting the members of the House of
5 Representatives to rise to a standing ovation; and

6 WHEREAS, Mr. Keenan attended Johns Hopkins University
7 studying sociology and psychology and planned to work as a guide
8 for international mountain climbers; and

9 WHEREAS, For years, Mr. Keenan trained every day at Brown's
10 Gym in Clarks Summit and, as part of his training regimen, ran
11 between 10 to 12 miles daily; and

12 WHEREAS, The following family and loved ones survive Mr.
13 Keenan: his mother, Diane Lozinger-Keenan, with whom he resided;
14 two sisters, Candis Nesgoda of White Haven and Diane Carson of
15 Scranton; brother, Jeffrey Lozinger of Clarks Summit; half-
16 brothers, Jimmy, Tommy and Paul Keenan, all of New York; uncle,
17 Edmund Carr, and his wife, Darlene, of Clarks Summit; aunt,
18 Charlotte Boyle of Minnesota; nieces; nephews; cousins; and many
19 friends and fellow climbers; and

20 WHEREAS, The following family members preceded Mr. Keenan in
21 death: his father, James Keenan and brother, John (Duke)
22 Lozinger; maternal grandparents, Clara and Edmund Carr; aunt,
23 Janet Howells; and uncle, James Carr; and

24 WHEREAS, Mr. VonRueden recently began a career as an
25 emergency medical technician and developed a passion for
26 traveling after finishing high school in Watertown, Wisconsin;
27 and

28 WHEREAS, Mr. VonRueden is survived by the following family
29 members: parents, Peter and Renee VonRueden, both of Clyman,
30 Wisconsin; and brother, Aaron VonRueden of Portage, Wisconsin;

1 therefore be it

2 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives celebrate the
3 lives of Francis James Keenan and Jarod VonRueden and express
4 condolences to their families upon their untimely and tragic
5 passing.