

H. Res. 752

In the House of Representatives, U. S.,

November 4, 2009.

Whereas the St. Paul Mine Company Mine in Cherry, a town in Bureau County, Illinois, began operation in 1905;

Whereas the mine supplied the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad with 300,000 tons of coal annually for its locomotives;

Whereas coal remains an abundant source of energy in Illinois and across the country;

Whereas the majority of Cherry miners were immigrants working to achieve the American dream;

Whereas 490 men and boys were working in the mine on Saturday, November 13, 1909;

Whereas 10 of the Cherry miners were boys under the age of 16, including one who was 10 years old, were hired illegally;

Whereas United Mine Workers represented miners at the Cherry Mine in 1909 and continue to represent workers throughout the United States and Canada;

Whereas according to the Mine Safety and Health Administration, there were 2,642 coal mining fatalities in the United States in 1909;

Whereas the main and secondary shafts of the Cherry Mine contained wooden stairs and ladders;

Whereas an electrical outage at the Cherry Mine caused the workers to light kerosene lanterns and torches;

Whereas a torch caught fire 500 feet below the surface in the Cherry Mine;

Whereas the efforts to redirect the fire caused flammable material such as wood to ignite and rapidly spread the fire;

Whereas two shafts were closed to smother the fire;

Whereas the shaft closings cut off oxygen to the workers, and allowed “black damp”, a mixture of deadly carbon dioxide and nitrogen to spread through the mine;

Whereas over 200 miners managed to make their way to the surface to escape the fire;

Whereas a group of miners, lead by John Bundy, showed incredible courage by journeying down the mine shaft 6 times to rescue their fellow miners;

Whereas on the seventh attempt the miners caught fire and burned to death;

Whereas a group of 21 miners, who later became known as the “eight-day men”, sealed themselves from the fire;

Whereas the “eight-day men” exhibited behavior that can only be described as selfless when helping each other survive;

Whereas a team rescued these men after 8 grueling days underground in torturous conditions;

Whereas 259 miners, including 4 children, perished in what became known as the Great Cherry Mine Disaster;

Whereas the United Mine Workers pressed successfully for mine safety reforms following this and other disasters like it;

Whereas the United States Bureau of Mines was created in 1910 as a result of disasters like the Great Cherry Mine Disaster;

Whereas the State of Illinois reacted by passing stronger mine safety regulations;

Whereas those mine regulations included requiring mine owners to maintain firefighting equipment and require certain workers to pass safety tests;

Whereas the Illinois' Worker's Compensation Act of 1911 recognized the dangers that mine workers faced and continue to face today; and

Whereas November 13, 2009, marks the 100th anniversary of the Great Cherry Mine Disaster: Now, therefore, be it *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

(1) honors the 259 miners lost in the tragedy known as the Great Cherry Mine Disaster on its 100th anniversary; and

(2) supports the important safety measures that were enacted as a result of this terrible incident and others around the country like it.

Attest:

Clerk.