



State of Wisconsin
2015 - 2016 LEGISLATURE

LRB-2010/4
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2015 ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION 40

May 14, 2015 – Introduced by Representatives SINICKI, BROSTOFF, MASON, OHNSTAD, MILROY, KESSLER, JOHNSON, C. TAYLOR, ZAMARRIPA, SARGENT, BERCEAU, SUBECK, GOYKE, SPREITZER, BARCA, POPE, GENRICH, YOUNG, RIEMER, ZEPNICK, BARNES and BOWEN, cosponsored by Senators C. LARSON, CARPENTER, L. TAYLOR, HARRIS DODD, WIRCH, BEWLEY and VINEHOUT. Referred to Committee on Rules.

1 **Relating to:** commemorating the Bay View labor strike and tragedy.

2 Whereas, Wisconsin workers and reformers have long made important
3 contributions in the history of labor in the United States, having helped enact new
4 state laws early in the 20th century such as Worker’s Compensation and
5 Unemployment Insurance, that, in turn, were adopted by other states and the
6 federal government; and

7 Whereas, decades earlier, in the late 1800s, workers were still struggling to
8 attain basic rights in the workplace, and still generally labored at physically
9 punishing jobs for 10 to 12 hours a day, six days a week; and

10 Whereas, in the 1880s, workers in Milwaukee began, like others in Chicago and
11 across the country, to advocate for the eight-hour work day, an early cornerstone of
12 the basic bill of rights of all people in the workplace; and

13 Whereas, facing no apparent efforts toward this reform on the part of
14 employers, eventually workers’ organizations across the nation called upon all

1 workers to cease their labor if employers had not adopted a standard eight-hour
2 work day by May 1, 1886; and

3 Whereas, in Milwaukee, civil parades and demonstrations developed over the
4 first five days of May, 1886, as workers peaceably and without violence joined the
5 national work-stoppage to protest and abolish inhumane work hours; and

6 Whereas, on May 2nd there was a huge Eight-Hour Day Parade that many
7 German and Polish workers and their families walked in to the picnic grounds, and
8 on May 3rd thousands of workers from the breweries and the building trades went
9 on strikes and marched around from factory to factory; and

10 Whereas, by May 5th, 1886, unrest among Milwaukee's laborers over the
11 struggle for better work hours had led to more than a dozen strikes in the city,
12 involving carpenters, coal heavers, sewer diggers, iron moulders, teamsters,
13 common laborers, and other workers asking for humane work hours; and

14 Whereas, the last grand factory in Milwaukee still in operation that day was
15 the North Chicago Rolling Mill, in Bay View, which manufactured rails for the
16 nation's railroads; and

17 Whereas, on May 5th, despite the threat of violence from the state militia, a
18 crowd of striking workers started to walk, peaceably and unarmed, to the Rolling
19 Mill to enjoin workers there to participate in the general strike; and

20 Whereas, despite the law-abiding nature of their procession, this group of
21 walking laborers was fired upon by the state militia upon direct orders from
22 Governor Jeremiah Rusk to do so, killing seven people and wounding four, including
23 innocent bystanders; and

24 Whereas, some 50 of those workers who marched that day and were fired upon
25 were indicted on charges of rioting and conspiracy for merely exercising their right

1 of freedom to assemble, and three of them eventually served six to nine months in
2 prison; and

3 Whereas, the infamous events of May 5th, 1886, will remain a part of
4 Wisconsin's cultural and economic legacy forever, and should remind us in the
5 present to honor the sacrifices our forebears made, including laying down their lives,
6 so that all those who labor might lead safer and more productive work lives; now,
7 therefore, be it

8 ***Resolved by the assembly, the senate concurring, That*** the Wisconsin
9 legislature recognizes the historic significance of this pivotal series of events in
10 Wisconsin's and the nation's history, and directs that, from this day forward, the fifth
11 day of May each year will be observed in our state as the anniversary of the Bay View
12 Labor Strike and Tragedy.

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(END)