



State of Wisconsin
2023 - 2024 LEGISLATURE

LRB-2675/1
CMH:klm

2023 SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 31

April 14, 2023 - Introduced by Senators LARSON, AGARD, CARPENTER, HESSELBEIN, ROYS, TAYLOR and WIRCH, cosponsored by Representatives SINICKI, CLANCY, C. ANDERSON, J. ANDERSON, ANDRACA, BALDEH, BARE, CABRERA, CONLEY, CONSIDINE, DONOVAN, DRAKE, EMERSON, JOERS, MADISON, MOORE OMOKUNDE, NEUBAUER, OHNSTAD, ORTIZ-VELEZ, PALMERI, SHANKLAND, SHELTON, SNODGRASS, STUBBS, SUBECK and VINING. Referred to Committee on Senate Organization.

AUTHORS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

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 twentieth 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 per day, six days per week; and

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

13 Whereas, employers made no efforts toward reform, and eventually workers'
14 organizations across the nation called upon all workers to cease their labor if
15 employers had not adopted a standard eight-hour workday by May 1, 1886; and

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

4 Whereas, on May 2, 1886, many German and Polish workers and their families
5 walked to the picnic grounds in a huge Eight-Hour Day Parade, and on May 3,
6 thousands of workers from the breweries and the building trades went on strikes and
7 marched from factory to factory; and

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

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

15 Whereas, on May 5, 1886, despite the threat of violence from the state militia,
16 a crowd of striking workers started to walk, peaceably and unarmed, to the Rolling
17 Mill to enjoin workers there to participate in the general strike; and

18 Whereas, despite the law-abiding nature of their procession, this group of
19 walking laborers was fired upon by the state militia, on direct orders from Governor
20 Jeremiah Rusk, resulting in seven people killed and four, including innocent
21 bystanders, wounded; and

22 Whereas, some 50 of the workers who marched that day and were fired upon
23 were indicted on charges of rioting and conspiracy for merely exercising their right
24 of freedom to assemble, and three of them eventually served six to nine months in
25 prison; and

