



2011 ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION 58

September 26, 2011 - Introduced by Representatives KESTELL and BERCEAU, cosponsored by Senators SCHULTZ and RISSER. Referred to Committee on Rules.

1 **Relating to:** commemorating the 150th birthday of Old Abe.

2 Whereas, “Old Abe,” America’s most famous bird, was born or hatched in 1861.
3 Chief Sky of the Lac du Flambeau Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa captured the
4 orphaned eaglet at the headwaters of the Flambeau where the counties of Ashland,
5 Price, and Iron are joined; and

6 Whereas, the eagle was traded for a bushel of corn to Dan and Margaret
7 McCann who lived in the Chippewa Valley near Jim Falls, and who kept the bird as
8 a family pet; and

9 Whereas, months later, President Lincoln called upon the governors of
10 northern states to raise troops for the Civil War. Mr. McCann, a disabled man,
11 offered his eagle as a mascot to the recently mobilized Eau Claire Company; and

12 Whereas, Captain Perkins named the young eagle “Old Abe” and had a perch
13 made on a five-foot pole to be carried into war by the first of a total of six appointed
14 soldiers known as the “eagle-bearers”; and

1 Whereas, on October 12, 1861, the men became Company C of the 8th Regiment
2 of the Wisconsin Voluntary Infantry and, led by their mascot, Old Abe, travelled
3 south to participate in the Civil War; and

4 Whereas, riding on his perch alongside the flags at the head of the regiment,
5 the eagle was a veteran of thirty-seven battles and skirmishes including the Battle
6 at Vicksburg, Mississippi, and participated in the campaign which opened the entire
7 Mississippi River and assured federal domination of the nation's watery highways;
8 and

9 Whereas, in September 1864, the all-volunteer "Eagle Regiment" was
10 mustered out and voted unanimously to present Old Abe to the state of Wisconsin "as
11 an honored and inspiring memento of the 8th Regiment." Governor Lewis assured
12 that Old Abe would be "well-cared for at the Capitol, where it would remain to invoke
13 inspiring memories of the brave boys who carried it with such honor to themselves
14 and the State," and Old Abe moved into a two-room apartment in the Capitol's
15 basement; and

16 Whereas, after the war, Old Abe was in great demand by the public. He traveled
17 extensively in the country as Ambassador for the Grand Army of the Republic,
18 participating in parades and political rallies. The eagle was received with great
19 honor at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. His attendance and photos
20 helped raise thousands of dollars for soldier hospitals. He travelled to Boston on more
21 than one occasion to help raise funds for the preservation of historic buildings in New
22 England; and

23 Whereas, tragically, in 1881, Old Abe succumbed to the fumes of a small fire in
24 the Capitol's basement. Interest in the eagle continued to grow and his remains were

1 on public display until they were lost in 1904 in the fire that destroyed the Capitol;
2 and

3 Whereas, in 1915, the newly-constructed assembly chambers in the Wisconsin
4 State Capitol were opened, and the members of the state assembly received a replica
5 of Old Abe and had it mounted above the Speaker's Chair, where Old Abe continues
6 to preside today; and

7 Whereas, replicas of Old Abe were also given to the Wisconsin Veterans
8 Museum and the Smithsonian Museum, and statues of Old Abe were erected in
9 Camp Randall, Eau Claire, Racine, Jim Falls, and Park Falls. A great granite effigy
10 of Old Abe was placed atop of the Wisconsin State Memorial Monument in the
11 National Military Park in Vicksburg, Mississippi; and

12 Whereas, Old Abe's likeness still appears on the uniform of America's famous
13 101st Airborne Division, "The Screaming Eagles"; now, therefore, be it

14 ***Resolved by the assembly, the senate concurring, That*** the Wisconsin
15 legislature commemorates the 150th anniversary of the birth of Old Abe and honors
16 his courageous service to the nation.

17 (END)