



State of Wisconsin
2017 - 2018 LEGISLATURE

LRB-2663/1
RAC:wlj

2017 ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 29

February 22, 2018 - Introduced by Representative SINICKI. Referred to Committee on Rules.

1 **Relating to:** commemorating the date of the Bay View labor strike and tragedy and
2 the removal of the portrait of Jeremiah Rusk from public display in the
3 Assembly parlor during that week of commemoration.

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

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

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

1 Whereas, facing no apparent efforts toward this reform on the part of
2 employers, workers' organizations across the nation eventually called upon all
3 workers to cease their labor if employers had not adopted a standard eight-hour
4 workday by May 1, 1886; and

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

8 Whereas, on May 2, 1886, there was a huge Eight-Hour Day Parade in which
9 many German and Polish workers and their families walked to the picnic grounds,
10 and on May 3, 1886, thousands of workers from the breweries and the building trades
11 went on strikes and marched from factory to factory; and

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

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

19 Whereas, on May 5, 1886, despite the threat of violence from the state militia,
20 a crowd of striking workers started to walk, peaceably and unarmed, to the Rolling
21 Mill to enjoin the workers there, known as iron puddlers, to participate in the general
22 strike; and

23 Whereas, despite the law-abiding nature of their procession, this group of
24 walking laborers was fired upon by the state militia upon direct orders from

1 Governor Jeremiah Rusk to do so, killing seven people and wounding four, including
2 innocent bystanders; and

3 Whereas, some 50 of those workers who marched that day and were fired upon
4 were indicted on charges of rioting and conspiracy for merely exercising their right
5 of freedom to assemble, and three of them eventually served six to nine months in
6 prison; and

7 Whereas, the infamous events of May 5, 1886, will remain a part of Wisconsin's
8 cultural and economic legacy forever, and should remind us in the present to honor
9 the sacrifices our forebearers made, including laying down their lives, so that all
10 those who labor might lead safer and more productive work lives; and

11 Whereas, the citizens of Bay View and Milwaukee commemorate this pivotal
12 series of events annually on the first Sunday of May at the site of the Bay View
13 Rolling Mill Historic Marker at S. Superior Street and E. Russell Avenue in
14 Milwaukee; now, therefore, be it

15 ***Resolved by the assembly, That*** on May 5 of each year and during the ensuing
16 week, to commemorate the Bay View strike and tragedy and the sad fact of deadly
17 opposition used by then-Governor Jeremiah Rusk, the assembly chief clerk shall
18 remove the portrait of Jeremiah Rusk that hangs in the Assembly parlor from all
19 public display and shall hang in its place on those days the historic portrait of the
20 iron puddlers at the Bay View Rolling Mill that regularly hangs in the offices of
21 Assembly District 20.

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(END)