



HR0691

LRB096 15093 GRL 30118 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of
3 Representatives wish to commemorate the 100th anniversary of
4 the Cherry Mine Disaster, which claimed the lives of 259 men
5 and boys on November 13, 1909; and

6 WHEREAS, The Cherry Mine was opened in 1905 by the Chicago,
7 Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad to supply coal for the
8 railroad's trains; the miners were composed of a large number
9 of immigrants, many of whom could not speak English; boys as
10 young as 11 years old also worked in the mine; and

11 WHEREAS, On November 13, 1909, nearly 500 men and boys,
12 along with 3 dozen mules, were sent to work in the mine; an
13 electrical outage earlier in the week had forced the workers to
14 light kerosene lanterns and torches; shortly after noon, a coal
15 car filled with hay for the mules caught fire from one of the
16 wall lanterns; efforts to move the fire only spread the blaze
17 to the timbers that supported the mine; the large fan installed
18 in the mine was reversed in an attempt to blow out the fire,
19 but this only succeeded in igniting the fan house itself as
20 well as the escape ladders and stairs in the secondary shaft,
21 trapping more miners below; and

22 WHEREAS, In response to the growing fire, the two affected

1 shafts were closed off to smother the fire, but this also had
2 the effect of cutting off oxygen to the miners and allowing
3 "black damp", a suffocating mixture of carbon dioxide and
4 nitrogen, to build up in the mine; some 200 men and boys made
5 their way to the surface through escape shafts and the hoisting
6 cage; some miners who had already escaped returned to the mine
7 to aid their coworkers; one group of miners trapped in the mine
8 built a makeshift wall to protect themselves from the fire and
9 poisonous gas; although without food, they were able to drink
10 from a pool of water leaking from a coal seam while they moved
11 deeper into the mine to escape the black damp; 8 days later,
12 the 21 survivors tore down the wall and made their way through
13 the mine in search of more water, but instead came across a
14 rescue party; and

15 WHEREAS, As a result of the Cherry Mine Disaster, the
16 Illinois General Assembly established stronger mine safety
17 regulations the following year; in 1911, as a response to the
18 paltry compensation offered to the miners for their suffering,
19 the General Assembly passed a separate law that would later
20 develop into the Illinois Workmen's Compensation Act; on the
21 national level, the U.S. Bureau of Mines was created to improve
22 governmental oversight for the nation's mines; therefore, be it

23 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
24 NINETY-SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we

1 commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Cherry Mine Disaster
2 and ask the people of Illinois to honor the lives and legacies
3 of the 259 men and boys who were tragically killed in this
4 terrible disaster; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
6 presented to Robert McCook, Village President of the Village of
7 Cherry.