2025 ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION 53

May 8, 2025 - Introduced by Representatives SINICKI, CLANCY, MOORE OMOKUNDE, MADISON, KIRSCH, NEUBAUER, ROE, PHELPS, EMERSON, ARNEY, DESMIDT, STROUD, TENORIO, HYSELL, HONG, JOHNSON, CRUZ, STUBBS, RIVERA-WAGNER, ANDRACA, DESANTO, MIRESSE, SUBECK, J. JACOBSON, UDELL, JOERS, BARE, BILLINGS, PALMERI and ORTIZ-VELEZ, cosponsored by Senators LARSON, CARPENTER, ROYS, WIRCH, SPREITZER, DRAKE, HESSELBEIN and RATCLIFF. 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 per day, six days per week; and

10 Whereas, in the 1880s, workers in Milwaukee, like others in Chicago and

11 across the country, began to advocate for the eight-hour workday, an early

12 cornerstone of the basic bill of rights of all people in the workplace; and

13 Whereas, employers made no efforts toward reform, and eventually workers'

1 organizations across the nation called upon all workers to cease their labor if

2 employers had not adopted a standard eight-hour workday 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 2, 1886, many German and Polish workers and their

7 families walked to the picnic grounds in a huge Eight-Hour Day Parade, and on

8 May 3, thousands of workers from the breweries and the building trades went on

9 strikes and marched from factory to factory; and

10 Whereas, by May 5, 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 5, 1886, despite the threat of violence from the state militia,

18 a 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, on direct orders from Governor

22 Jeremiah Rusk, resulting in seven people killed and four, including innocent

23 bystanders, wounded; and

1 Whereas, some 50 of the workers who marched that day and were fired upon

2 were indicted on charges of rioting and conspiracy for merely exercising their right

3 of freedom to assemble, and three of them eventually served six to nine months in

4 prison; and

5 Whereas, the infamous events of May 5, 1886, will remain a part of

6 Wisconsin's cultural and economic legacy forever and should remind us in the

7 present to honor the sacrifices of our forebears, including laying down their lives, so

8 that all those who labor might lead safer and more productive work lives; now,

9 therefore, be it

10 ***Resolved by the assembly, the senate concurring, That*** the Wisconsin

11 Legislature recognizes the historic significance of this pivotal series of events in

12 Wisconsin's and the nation's history, and directs that, from this day forward, the

13 fifth day of May each year will be observed in our state as the anniversary of the

14 Bay View labor strike and tragedy.

15 **(END)**