

---

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

---

# HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 979 Session of  
2018

---

INTRODUCED BY CEPHAS, BARRAR, READSHAW, NEILSON, QUIGLEY,  
SOLOMON, THOMAS, SIMS, YOUNGBLOOD, SCHLOSSBERG, KINSEY,  
DRISCOLL, HILL-EVANS, MURT, DALEY, ROEBUCK, DONATUCCI, WATSON  
AND GILLEN, JUNE 18, 2018

---

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY,  
JUNE 18, 2018

---

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the Congress of the United States to allocate funding for  
2 the specific purpose of dredging the Schuylkill River and to  
3 fulfill the requirements of a congressional mandate that  
4 provides for the required maintenance of the Schuylkill  
5 River.

6 WHEREAS, Before the Great Depression, Philadelphia regularly  
7 dredged the Schuylkill River to keep it free of coal waste and  
8 sediment; and

9 WHEREAS, During the 1950s, dredging of the Schuylkill River  
10 resumed as a result of coal mining remediation initiatives; and

11 WHEREAS, By the 1990s, the Schuylkill River was once again in  
12 poor condition, primarily due to increased sedimentation caused  
13 by agricultural activities and rapid suburban development; and

14 WHEREAS, A Federal law enacted in 1996 provided the United  
15 States Army Corps of Engineers with the responsibility to care  
16 for and manage the Schuylkill River; and

17 WHEREAS, Federal law requires the periodic removal and  
18 disposal of sediment to provide for a depth of six feet within

1 portions of the Fairmount pool between the Fairmount Dam and the  
2 Columbia Bridge located within the limits of the channel  
3 alignments referred to as the Schuylkill River Racecourse and  
4 return lane, the Belmont Water Works intakes and Boathouse Row;  
5 and

6 WHEREAS, The Schuylkill River was last dredged in 1999, when  
7 30,000 cubic yards of silt were removed over the course of  
8 several months; and

9 WHEREAS, Over the past 18 years, the portions of the  
10 Schuylkill River known as the Schuylkill River Racecourse and  
11 return lane, the Belmont Water Works intakes and Boathouse Row  
12 have gradually filled with silt and debris, raising the floor of  
13 the river and creating shallow conditions that have directly  
14 affected rowers' abilities to traverse certain lanes of the  
15 racecourse; and

16 WHEREAS, Since 2015, the United States Army Corps of  
17 Engineers has repeatedly stated that the Schuylkill River needs  
18 to be dredged due to its current state; and

19 WHEREAS, In past years, at the urging of the United States  
20 Army Corps of Engineers, dredging of the Schuylkill River has  
21 been added as a project in the Federal budget, but the project  
22 has yet to receive funding; and

23 WHEREAS, The Schuylkill Navy, the nation's oldest amateur  
24 athletic association, is the governing body that oversees  
25 Boathouse Row and Schuylkill River Racecourse activities; and

26 WHEREAS, The Schuylkill Navy has been actively working with  
27 Philadelphia city leaders, members of Congress from Pennsylvania  
28 and area universities to advocate for the dredging of the  
29 Schuylkill River; and

30 WHEREAS, Today, the depth off the docks of Boathouse Row is

less than one foot, rendering boat launching difficult and navigation along Boathouse Row hazardous; and

WHEREAS, A roughly 3.5-mile span of the Schuylkill River located between the Strawberry Mansion Bridge and the Columbia Railroad Bridge is the home of a national rowing racecourse and hosts a multitude of annual rowing and regatta activities; and

WHEREAS, Not only is the aspect of fairness called into question when certain rowers are placed at a competitive disadvantage due to shallow waters, but the health and safety of rowing participants is also a primary concern; and

WHEREAS, Inexperienced rowers have been stuck in the mud on several occasions, thereby having to climb out of their vessels and drag them to deeper waters; and

WHEREAS, In some instances, rowers' boats have hit shallow waters, causing them to capsize; and

WHEREAS, According to the United States Army Corps of Engineers, all race lanes should be a minimum depth of six feet to ensure the health and safety of rowers and to provide all participants with an opportunity to engage in a fair and equal competition; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia has been regarded as the nation's finest rowing city, hosting the largest high school, collegiate and club regattas in the nation; and

WHEREAS, Rowing activities are a tremendous economic driver for the local economy, regularly filling hotels, restaurants and shops with rowing participants and spectators; and

WHEREAS, The presence of rowing and its long history in Philadelphia has enhanced the quality of life for individuals who engage in water sports and for nearly all residents of Philadelphia; therefore be it

1       RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives urge the Congress  
2 of the United States to allocate funding for the specific  
3 purpose of dredging the Schuylkill River and to fulfill the  
4 requirements of a congressional mandate that provides for the  
5 required maintenance of the Schuylkill River; and be it further

6       RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to  
7 the presiding officers of each house of Congress and to each  
8 member of Congress from Pennsylvania.