
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 163 Session of
2017

INTRODUCED BY STREET, BROWNE, FONTANA, FARNESE, DINNIMAN,
GREENLEAF, YUDICHAK, SABATINA, KILLION AND RAFFERTY,
JUNE 29, 2017

INTRODUCED AND ADOPTED, JUNE 29, 2017

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing the 140th anniversary of the uprising of the miners
2 who became known as the "Molly Maguires."

3 WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was founded on the
4 principles of fairness and tolerance; and

5 WHEREAS, During this time, many communities of coal miners
6 settled in several counties of northeastern Pennsylvania; and

7 WHEREAS, These mines, like many coal mines across the
8 country, employed a high percentage of immigrants from various
9 countries, including Ireland, as discrimination prevented them
10 from acquiring less dangerous work; and

11 WHEREAS, In response to a 20% cut in wages and horrendous
12 working conditions, the mine laborers decided to go on strike
13 and attempted to unionize; and

14 WHEREAS, From 1876 to 1878, several alleged members of the
15 Molly Maguires in Carbon, Columbia, Northumberland and
16 Schuylkill Counties were tried, convicted and sentenced to jail
17 or hanged; and

1 WHEREAS, Agents and employees of the Philadelphia and Reading
2 Railroad, the Philadelphia and Reading Coal and Iron Company,
3 the Lehigh and Wilkes-Barre Coal and Iron Company and the Lehigh
4 Valley Railroad conducted the investigation, arrest and
5 prosecution of these individuals; and

6 WHEREAS, Special prosecuting attorneys who were on the
7 payrolls of railroad and mining companies were used, and jury
8 selection was conducted in a manner that ensured ethnic bigotry
9 and bias; and

10 WHEREAS, The trial judges were closely connected with the
11 railroad and mining companies that instigated the investigations
12 and trials; and

13 WHEREAS, Witnesses were intimidated to commit perjury against
14 the defendants, and entrapment was used to accumulate evidence;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, On a day which lives on in infamy known as the "Day
17 of the Rope," 20 Irishmen were ultimately hanged with little or
18 no evidence of their complicity in any crimes; and

19 WHEREAS, It has been shown that due process and
20 constitutional rights were lacking in these trials; and

21 WHEREAS, As a result of these trials, Barney Boyle, Kate
22 Boyle, Patrick Butler, John Campbell, Dennis Canning, Patrick
23 Dolan, Christopher Donnelly, Neil Dougherty, James Duffy, John
24 Gibbons, Bridget Hyland, Michael Lawler, Charles McAllister,
25 Patrick McKenna, Ned Monaghan, John Morris, Michael O'Brien,
26 Patrick O'Donnell, Francis O'Neil and John O'Neil were sentenced
27 to imprisonment; and

28 WHEREAS, James Boyle, Alexander Campbell, James Carroll, John
29 Donahue, Michael J. Doyle, Thomas Duffy, Edward Kelly, Hugh
30 McGehan, Thomas Munley and James Roarity were hanged in 1877;

1 and

2 WHEREAS, Dennis Donnelly, Thomas Fisher, Patrick Hester, John
3 Kehoe, Peter McHugh and Patrick Tully were hanged in 1878; and

4 WHEREAS, Martin Bergin, James McDonnell, Peter McManus and
5 Charles Sharpe were hanged in 1879; and

6 WHEREAS, History does not question that coal miners were
7 treated menially and unfairly by coal mine owners, that miners
8 and owners struggled over the harsh working conditions and that
9 occasional crimes were committed by some members of the Molly
10 Maguires and by nonmembers against coal mine owners; and

11 WHEREAS, These events helped to pave the way for unions and,
12 more specifically, the United Mine Workers of America, to
13 galvanize and organize so that workers would benefit from safer
14 working conditions and more regulated pay and hours; and

15 WHEREAS, History also does not question the fundamental
16 unconstitutionality of the trials, since it is well documented
17 that a private corporation initiated the investigation through a
18 private, hired detective agency, a private police force arrested
19 the alleged offenders and coal company attorneys prosecuted
20 them; and

21 WHEREAS, The Honorable Milton Shapp, former Governor of the
22 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, pardoned the alleged leader of the
23 Molly Maguires in 1979 due to the rampant xenophobia and poor
24 judicial practices that irreparably tainted the trials;
25 therefore be it

26 RESOLVED, That the Senate recognize the 140th anniversary of
27 the uprising of the miners who became known as the "Molly
28 Maguires"; and be it further

29 RESOLVED, That the Senate recognize this important episode in
30 Pennsylvania history and its relevance to the rights of working

1 men and women in the United States.