
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 144 Session of
2023

INTRODUCED BY STREET, FONTANA, DILLON, KEARNEY, TARTAGLIONE,
SANTARSIERO, ROBINSON, SCHWANK, HAYWOOD, COSTA, BREWSTER AND
CAPPELLETTI, JUNE 29, 2023

REFERRED TO RULES AND EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS, JUNE 29, 2023

A RESOLUTION

1 Recognizing the 146th anniversary of the uprising of the miners
2 who became known as the "Molly Maguires."

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

5 WHEREAS, During the 19th century, many communities of coal
6 miners settled in several counties of northeastern Pennsylvania;
7 and

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

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

16 WHEREAS, From 1876 to 1878, several miners who were alleged
17 members of the Molly Maguires in Carbon, Columbia,

1 Northumberland and Schuylkill Counties were tried, convicted and
2 sentenced to jail or hanged; and

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

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

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

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

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

21 WHEREAS, It has been shown that due process and
22 constitutional rights were lacking in the trials; and

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

30 WHEREAS, James Boyle, Alexander Campbell, James Carroll, John

1 Donahue, Michael J. Doyle, Thomas Duffy, Edward Kelly, Hugh
2 McGehan, Thomas Munley and James Roarity were hanged in 1877;
3 and

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 RESOLVED, That the Senate recognize the 146th anniversary of
28 the uprising of the miners who became known as the "Molly
29 Maguires"; and be it further

30 RESOLVED, That the Senate recognize this important episode in

1 the history of this Commonwealth and its relevance to the rights
2 of working men and women in the United States.