



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION DESIGNATING MAY 1 AS INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY

WHEREAS, on May 1, 1886, more than 300,000 U.S.-born and immigrant workers walked off their jobs to demand a shorter workday; and

WHEREAS, the epicenter of the movement was Chicago where 80,000 workers marched down Michigan Avenue arm-in-arm, their cry: "Eight-hour day with not cut in pay;" and

WHEREAS, three days later, on May 4, 1886, a peaceful rally for the eight-hour workday and a protest against the previous attacks on striking workers by police were held at Haymarket Square; and

WHEREAS, an unknown assailant threw a bomb into the crowd at the rally, killing one police officer, and resulting in a violent confrontation which left six officers and several workers dead; and

WHEREAS, labor activists, socialists, and anarchists were blamed for the "incident," and eight men were arrested and wrongfully convicted; and

WHEREAS, four of those eight men - August Spies, Adolph Fischer, George Engel, and Albert Parsons - were executed in a grave act of injustice, and a fifth, Louis Lingg was found dead in his cell; and

WHEREAS, six out of the eight men were immigrant workers; five of them were born in Germany and one in England; and

WHEREAS, in July 1889, on the 100th anniversary of the storming of the Bastille, an international federation of political leaders and trade unions met in Paris, and the assembled delegates, representing 24 nations, chose May 1 as International Workers' Day in honor of the Haymarket Martyrs of Chicago to continue the struggle for a shorter workday; and

WHEREAS, on June 26, 1893, Illinois Governor John P. Altgeld pardoned Michael Schwab, Samuel Fielden, and Oscar Neebe - the three remaining men wrongfully prosecuted for "Haymarket Affair" or "Haymarket Incident," and

WHEREAS, on the first day of May of each year - May Day - millions of workers around the world take to the streets to continue the struggle for economic justice and workers' rights; and

WHEREAS, the first day of May 2023 will mark 137 years since the first May Day march occurred in Chicago; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the Cook County Board President and the members of the Cook County Board of Commissioners, assembled this twenty-seventh day of April 2023, do hereby recognize the first day of May of each year as International Workers' Day, and commemorate August Spies, Adolph Fischer, George Engel, Albert Parsons, and Louis Lingg as martyrs for the great cause of labor; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Cook County Board President and the members of the Cook County Board of Commissioners send warm greetings to all workers and all labor organizations in Cook County and across the globe that will commemorate the 137th anniversary of the first May Day march in Chicago; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to the Illinois Labor History Society, ARISE Chicago, the Chicago Federation of Labor, and the Chicago Teachers Union..