

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION

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1997 Regular Session
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By: Senators Sfikas, Green, Middleton, Hogan, Madden, McFadden, and Teitelbaum

Constitutional Requirements Complied with for Introduction in the last 35 Days of
Session

Introduced and read first time: March 17, 1997

Rule 32(a) suspended

Assigned to: Rules

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION

1 A Senate Joint Resolution concerning

2 **Solemn Remembrance of the Sesquicentennial Anniversary of Black '47, the Bleakest**
3 **Year of the Great Famine in Ireland**

4 FOR the purpose of acknowledging the tragedy of the Great Famine in Ireland and the
5 suffering of the Irish People, particularly during 1847; honoring the memory of over
6 one million people that died between 1845 and 1850; and urging that the study of
7 the Great Famine, its causes and effects, be made a part of the primary and
8 secondary education courses taught in the State.

9 WHEREAS, This year marks the sesquicentennial anniversary of the worst year of
10 the Great Famine in Ireland, 1847, which is commonly referred to as "Black '47";

11 WHEREAS, Many Marylanders directly and indirectly descend from the Irish
12 people who fled the Great Famine and emigrated to the United States between 1845 and
13 1850;

14 WHEREAS, By 1845, the majority of the Irish people depended on the potato as
15 the main ingredient of their diet and their economy, and by 1847, ninety percent of the
16 potato crop was diseased by the fungus, *Phytophthora infestans*;

17 WHEREAS, Between 1845 and 1847, over one million pounds sterling worth of
18 food was exported out of Ireland by British merchants and the few wealthy Irish
19 landowners;

20 WHEREAS, The tragedy of Black '47 was compounded by severe winds, a
21 hurricane, torrential rains, hail, and snow, while hundreds of thousands of impoverished
22 people were evicted from their rented homesteads to increase the grazing pastures for
23 wealthy landlords;

24 WHEREAS, Crowds of Irish people lined up and waited for food at government
25 soup kitchens, which fed up to three million people each day during the first half of 1847,
26 yet were closed entirely by September 1847;

27 WHEREAS, Those Irish people that were able to work suffered terrible conditions
28 in workhouses to receive financial assistance from the government that often came late, if
29 at all;

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1 WHEREAS, The people of Ireland suffered epidemic dysentery, typhus, relapsing
2 fever, scurvy, hypothermia, and cholera, which were the final causes of death for
3 hundreds of thousands of people;

4 WHEREAS, Hundreds of thousands of Irish people died in their cabins, while
5 others too poor to afford a coffin were buried in mass graves, or left on the sides of roads;

6 WHEREAS, With the hope of survival in North America, over one million Irish
7 people risked their lives to cross the Atlantic Ocean in overcrowded rickety ships,
8 commonly referred to as "coffin ships", which often lacked sufficient provisions and were
9 rife with infectious diseases;

10 WHEREAS, Hundreds of thousands of the Irish people who attempted to emigrate
11 died en route or shortly after arriving in North America;

12 WHEREAS, Over one million people of Ireland died during the years 1845 and
13 1850 and over one million people emigrated from Ireland to the United States, Canada,
14 Australia, and Britain;

15 WHEREAS, The Great Famine constituted a true tragedy of humankind and
16 created the first boat people of modern Europe; now, therefore, be it

17 RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That today the
18 General Assembly of Maryland solemnly remembers the tragedy of the Great Famine in
19 Ireland and particularly its bleakest year, 1847, and the people that have since grown
20 nameless and faceless, but not forgotten; and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That the Great Famine in Ireland, and its causes and effects, shall be
22 taught to the primary and secondary students in Maryland to learn and remember the
23 suffering of the Irish people and to bring about a sensitivity to the causes and contributing
24 factors of such suffering in the world today; and be it further

25 RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded by the Department of
26 Legislative Reference to the Honorable Parris N. Glendening, Governor of Maryland; the
27 Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr., President of the Senate of Maryland; and the
28 Honorable Casper R. Taylor, Jr., Speaker of the House of Delegates.