SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION
No. 115

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED APRIL 26, 2021

Sponsored by:
Senator STEVEN V. OROHO
District 24 (Morris, Sussex and Warren)
Senator STEPHEN M. SWEENEY
District 3 (Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem)

Co-Sponsored by:
Senator Diegnan

SYNOPSIS

Designates month of March of each year as "Irish-American Heritage Month" in New Jersey.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/6/2021)

A JOINT RESOLUTION designating the month of March of each year as "Irish-American Heritage Month" in New Jersey and amending P.L.1997, J.R.2.

WHEREAS, Many Irish people emigrated from Ireland to the United States in search of better economic opportunities, political and religious freedom, and to escape famine, poverty, and oppression in their native land; and

WHEREAS, While emigration from Ireland has occurred in every period of American history, the most well- known mass emigration from Ireland to the United States occurred in the mid-19th century during the Great Famine, a period of mass starvation and disease in Ireland that occurred due to the failure of the potato crop; and

WHEREAS, Despite often arriving destitute, Irish-Americans contributed significantly to the culture and economic growth of the United States by taking less desirable and often dangerous jobs, such as domestic work, farming, coal mining, and the building of roads, bridges, canals, and railroads; and

WHEREAS, There was a mass emigration of Irish to the United States in the years prior to the Civil War and an estimated 150,000 Irish immigrants served in the Union Army, with Irish units suffering casualties of over 40 percent at Fredericksburg and playing a key role in the defeat of Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg; and

WHEREAS, Through hard work and determination, Americans of Irish descent achieved social and occupational gains through the generations and became teachers, policemen, firemen, lawyers, authors, artists, business owners, athletes, soldiers, and politicians; and

WHEREAS, According to the United States Census, approximately 32 million Americans report having Irish ancestry and 1.3 million people in New Jersey claimed Irish heritage; and

WHEREAS, Notable Irish-Americans from New Jersey have influenced the United States and New Jersey, such as President Grover Cleveland, musician Bruce Springsteen, actors John Travolta and Anne Hathaway, professor and human rights activist Edward Neafsey, and United States Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan; and

WHEREAS, March is a significant month in Irish-American history and culture because the feast of Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, is celebrated on March 17 and the day is now recognized throughout the country and State as an occasion to celebrate Irish-American history and culture through parades and celebrations; and

WHEREAS, The week including March 17 is currently designated as "Irish-American History and Heritage Week" in New Jersey; and

WHEREAS, The State of New Jersey can recognize Irish-American contributions to the culture and economic growth of the United States and the State of New Jersey, acknowledge the historical

struggles of Irish-Americans, and recognize individuals with Irish ancestry by designing the month of March as "Irish-American Heritage Month" in New Jersey; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. Section 1 of P.L.1997, J.R.2 (C.36:2-43) is amended to read as follows:

a. The week including March 17 of every year is designated as "Irish-American History and Heritage Week".

b. The month of March of each year is designated as "Irish-American Heritage Month" in the State of New Jersey to recognize and celebrate the contributions of Irish-Americans.

c. The Governor is respectfully requested to annually issue a proclamation recognizing "Irish-American History and Heritage Week" and "Irish-American Heritage Month" in New Jersey, and call upon public officials and citizens of this State to observe the day with appropriate activities and programs.

(cf: P.L.1997, J.R.2, s.1)

2. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This Joint Resolution designates the month of March of each year as "Irish-American Heritage Month" and amends P.L.1997, J.R.2.

The Irish have immigrated to the United States and settled in states like New Jersey for centuries. The Irish settled in the United States to escape poverty and famine in their native land. They also immigrated to seek political and religious freedom, as well as better economic opportunities for themselves and their families. Despite often immigrating to the United States without any money, the Irish found success in their new home through their hard work and determination.

Irish-Americans often accepted difficult and dangerous jobs other Americans found undesirable, such as coal mining and the building of roads, bridges, and railroads. An estimated 150,000 Irish-Americans fought for the Union Army in the Civil War, suffering casualties of over 40 percent Based on the hard work of the first immigrants, second, third, and fourth generations of Irish-Americans continued contributing to American economic growth and culture by becoming teachers, policemen, lawyers, artists, and soldiers, among other professions. Today, approximately 32

million people in the United States and 1.3 million people in New Jersey claim Irish ancestry.

The Irish are as important to the economic prosperity and culture of the State of New Jersey as they are to the country as a whole. Notable individuals with Irish ancestry from New Jersey include President Grover Cleveland, musician Bruce Springsteen, actor Anne Hathaway, and Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, among many others.

March is an important month to Irish-Americans because the Feast of Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, is celebrated on March 17. March 17 has become over time the day to recognize Irish-American heritage, history, culture, and contributions through parades and celebrations.

The week of March 17 is already recognized as "Irish-American History and Heritage Week" in the State of New Jersey.