

Substitute for House Resolution No. 335.

A resolution to declare March 24-31, 2014, as Workplace Safety Week in the state of Michigan.

Whereas, The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, specializing in female blouses, employed over 500 immigrant workers and experienced a widespread, gruesome factory fire on March 25, 1911, where 146 workers perished; and

Whereas, A majority of the workers who perished in this fire were female immigrants, sometimes not older than 13 to 14 years old, who lived under immense poverty, received inadequate wages, and were forced to work long hours and six-day weeks; and

Whereas, The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory showed severe disregard for safety standards, as business owners were not legally mandated by either the federal or state government to implement safety procedures to protect employees in the workplace; and

Whereas, The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory allowed unsafe working conditions in its factory setting for employees who used sewing machines in cramped spaces with cotton pieces covering the floor that helped to spread the fire, as well as failed to repair building features, including three broken elevators and jammed doors preventing entry and exit; and

Whereas, The public shock and outrage following the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire catalyzed immense social pressure to protect workers on the job, including adopting eight-hour work days, establishing minimum wages, child labor laws, periodic factory inspections, among other appeals; and

Whereas, The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire sparked outrage and discussion on reform throughout Michigan as evident from the 1912 Michigan Conference of Charities and Corrections where residents addressed labor issues, including child labor and raising the minimum work age in Michigan that has continuously been reevaluated since the 1880s as to whether Michigan children should acquire employment instead of attending school; and

Whereas, The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire encouraged Michigan to address labor issues centered around improving the “common welfare” for Michigan residents and Michigan made progress adopting labor reforms including Michigan Governor Chase S. Osborn’s signing of the Michigan Workmen's Compensation Act in 1912, which provided compensation to injured workers for the first time in Michigan’s history; and

Whereas, The Triangle Shirtwaist Company tragedy led to new federal safety guidelines becoming implemented that ensured business owners provided safe working environments for their employees in order to minimize work injury and death; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives, That members of this legislative body declare March 24-31, 2014, as Workplace Safety Week in the state of Michigan. We recognize the 103rd anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company Fire in New York City, commemorate the victims of this horrific incident, and continue to dedicate state efforts towards guaranteeing Michigan law protects workers from workplace accidents. Michigan continues to be committed to protecting workers and ensuring businesses established in Michigan adopt and maintain safety procedures in the workplace.