



the

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“We Awaited Death:” The Cherry Mine Disaster

One hundred years ago this month, the families of 280 miners anxiously stood around a mine shaft in Cherry, Illinois, about 90 miles southwest of Chicago, waiting to learn if their loved ones had survived a horrible fire that broke out on November 13, 1909 in the St. Paul Coal Company’s mine.

That day, the Cherry mine was relying on kerosene lamps because its electrical system had failed. One of those lamps ignited a wagon of hay waiting for teams of hungry, underground mine mules. Initial attempts to quell the fire failed and some miners were never told about it until two hours after it began. By then the fire was uncontrollable.

Some miners escaped; a dozen made six dangerous trips back and rescued others. But they burned to death on their seventh trip. A total of 210 miners got out of the mine while 280 were trapped in the fiery coal tunnels below.

The mine was closed to abate the fire by chok-

ing it of oxygen. But outraged miners said the St. Paul Coal Company was thinking only of itself when it shut the mine. In her book, “Trapped: The 1909 Cherry Mine Disaster” (2003, Atria Books), Karen Tintori quotes a nearly thirty-year mine veteran who said the company closed the mine to save it, not the

men below. “He was certain the action killed men, since during the first hours of the fire experienced miners would not have rushed to their deaths through smoke and fire to reach the shafts (to escape), but instead would have retreated deep into the mine to wait it out.”

Eight days later, the mine’s temperature had cooled enough that officials were able to re-open it and survey the scene. They found 21 miners who had survived by walling themselves in from the toxic mine gases and

wetting their lips with drops of water leached from the coal beds. The oldest survivor died on the way to the surface.

The rest -- 259 miners, were dead.

On Thanksgiving Day, officials sealed the mine to extinguish the flames permanently. They repeatedly tested the mine’s temperature to determine if salvage efforts could begin, but the temperature didn’t cool sufficiently for that until February 1, 1910 according to Tintori’s book. Volunteers then began cleaning the mine of burnt debris and unrecognizable bodies while embers of the original fire burned. The last body was found in July, eight months after the inferno began.

Many of the miners were foreign-speaking immigrants who worked not for hourly wages, but wages based on production. The coal they hammered from hard walls fueled trains run by the mine’s owner



It took weeks for miners’ survivors to identify the 259 bodies of their loved ones who died in the Cherry Mine fire in November, 1909. Photo from the Library of Congress.

Disaster Exhibit

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is displaying a free exhibit about the Cherry Mine Disaster, called “The Flames Caught Us,” through March 31, 2010. The exhibit includes photographs, oral histories, newspaper articles, and other accounts of the disaster and its aftermath. For more information, go to: www.alplm.org/events/cherry_mine.html.

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The Cherry Mine Disaster

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-- the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad.

After the disaster, the Illinois General Assembly passed workers' compensation legislation enabling the miners' survivors to get awards from the mine company, it also passed mine safety regulations which required the establishment of mine rescue stations throughout Illinois to train miners for future accidents.

The Cherry Mine disaster was the third worst in the country. The mine resumed business late in 1910 and closed in 1927.



A Survivor's Story

“For a time a grim despair settled down upon us and we awaited the time when death would overtake us, with a determination to meet it bravely and not to show weakness before our fellow men...” relates Thomas White in “Eight Days in a Burning Mine,” his personal account of how he and 20 other miners managed to survive underground after the Cherry Mine disaster. Find it online at the U.S. Department of Labor’s Mine Safety and Health Administration Web site: www.mhsa.gov/CENTURY/MAG/MAG1.asp.

Capitol photo courtesy Brandy Renfro.

A black and white photograph of the Illinois State Capitol building, showing its prominent dome and classical architecture, set against a cloudy sky.

Veto Session Results

During Veto Session, the General Assembly not only dealt with vetoed bills, they also passed 50 bills (19 HBs and 31 SBs) and one HJRCA. Bills have 30 days to be enrolled and sent to the Governor and he has 60 days to act on them. While the legislation spanned a wide variety of subject matters, Ethics reform was a top subject. In the area of Ethics, they passed the following bills:

Senate Bill 146 (Link, D-30, Waukegan/Mathias, R-53, Buffalo Grove), Senate Bill 1466 (Harmon, D-39, Oak Park/Madigan, D-22, Chicago) and Senate Bill 1732 (Schoenberg, D-9, Evanston/Currie, D-25, Chicago) all deal with a variety of ethics reform issues that includes: -designating the process of filing, objecting to & filling of vacancies for a General Election; -reporting requirements to the State Board of Elections for businesses with State contracts totaling \$50,000; -expanding the definition of pay-to-play; -limiting campaign contributions; -changing disclosure of campaign finances; -changing the Illinois Procurement code; to-prohibiting certain contributions.

All three of these bills contained provisions to clarify Senate Bill 51 – Public Act 96-0795 (Schoenberg, D-9, Evanston/ Madigan, D-22, Chicago).

House Bill 4625 (Walker, D-66, Arlington Heights/Kotowski, D-33, Park Ridge) provides that the Cook County Board may override a veto of the Board President with 3/5ths votes (rather than 4/5ths vote) effective upon becoming law.

House Joint Resolution Constitutional Amendment 31 (Franks, D-63, Woodstock/Noland, D-22, Elgin) allows for the question of ‘Recall of the Governor’ to go on the November 2, 2010 General Election ballot for the citizens of Illinois to adopt or reject. If the voters adopt the question, HJRCA 31 sets forth the requirements, timing, and format for the recall petition as well as the successor election petition. If the Governor is removed, an Acting Governor determined by the Gubernatorial Succession section of the Constitution (the order is Lt. Governor, Attorney General, then Secretary of State) serves until the special successor winner takes office.

In the area of appropriations, the General Assembly passed the following legislation:

Senate Bill 1180 (Frerichs, D-52, Gifford/Madigan, D-22, Chicago) appropriates \$425 million to the Illinois Student Assistance Commission for awards grants and improvements. The bulk of this money will be for the Monetary Award Program (MAP)

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Vetoed Session Results*Continued from page 2*

grant funding for the second half of fiscal year 2010.

Senate Bill 1181 (Sullivan, D-47, Rushville/Maidgan, D-22, Chicago) includes the Fall Supplemental appropriation bill and Senate Bill 1265 (Harmon, D-39, Oak Park/Currie, D-25, Chicago) becomes as the Fall Supplemental Budget Implementation act (BIMP)

Senate Bill 1846 (Sullivan, D-47, Rushville/Nekritz, D-57, Northbrook) raises hunting fees (for Illinois residents from \$7 to \$12), deer permit fees, (from \$15 to \$25) sport fishing fees (residents from \$12.50 to \$14.50; non-residents from \$24 to \$31), sportsman combination fees (from \$18.50 to \$25.50) and waterfowl stamps (from \$10 to \$15) and re-

directs 25% of the proceeds of the stamp funds to the Department of Natural Resources for the maintenance of waterfowl habitat. If signed into law, this bill becomes effective January 1, 2010.

The following bills were acted on but did not pass during veto session but may be addressed at a later date: SB 941 – eliminates all free senior bus rides; HB 5 – proposed changes to the lobby registration law in SB 54- now PA 96-0555; SB 1471 regulates cemeteries; HB 1409 & SB 1425 change the date on which the Governor presents his budget address from the 3rd Wednesday in February (17th) to the 4th Wednesday in March (24th); and Video Gaming legislation (SB 744, HB 1306, HR 736).



Legislative Action On Vetoed Bills

	Amend Veto	Accept AV	Override AV	Dead AV	Total Veto	Override TV	Dead TV
House Bills	33	9	14	10	6	1	5
Senate Bills	18	4	7	7	4	0	4

2 House Bills had Reduction Vetoes; both Reduction Vetoes stand.

Bills that are dead, are so because one or both chambers did not act on the veto.



Transitions

Correction: In the last issue, we reported that **Dr. Carol Adams** will become Illinois Representative to Africa in the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's Office of Trade and Investment on January 1. While the newsletter was going to press, Dr. Adams declined the position.

J. Richard Alsop III assumed his new position as Architect of the Capitol on November 16. He was a partner in the private Charlotte, North Carolina firm of Charette Architects. He also owns and manages a property management company. Alsop was chosen for the job after officials with the Illinois House of Representatives and the Illinois Senate conducted a national search.

On November 10, **Governor Pat Quinn** created the new position of Illinois Director of Diversity Enhancement and appointed **Darryl Harris** to the post. As director, Harris will be responsible for "improving statewide opportunities for minority and women-owned businesses, especially in construction programs," according to the Governor's Office. Before this appointment Harris was the Deputy Director of Operations for the Capital Development Board.

John Sinsheimer became the State Director of Capital Markets on October 19. He was named to the position by Governor Quinn. Prior to that Sinsheimer was the Chief Financial Officer of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission.



96th ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY - 2010 CALENDAR

ALL session dates and deadlines are subject to change at ANY time!

January -----

- 1 – *New Year's Day* *
- 4 – Both Perfunctory
- 12 – Both Session @ 1:00 PM
- 13 – Both Session; State of the State (*tentative*)
- 14 – Both Session
- 15 – House Perfunctory; **Hse LRB deadline**
- 18 – *Martin Luther King Jr. Day* *
- 21 – Both Perfunctory
- 25 – House Perfunctory
- 28 – Senate Perfunctory
- 29 – House Perfunctory

February -----

- 1 – House Perfunctory
- 2 – Primary Election
- 3 – House Session; Senate Perfunctory
- 4 – House Session
- 5 – House Perfunctory
- 8 – Senate Session
- 9 – Both Session
- 10 – Both Session
- 11 – Both Session; **Hse Introduction Deadline; & Sen Introduction Deadline**
- 12 – *Lincoln's Birthday* * & 15 – *Presidents' Day* *
- 16 – Both Session
- 17 – Both Session; Governor's Budget Address - Constitutional
- 18 – Both Session
- 23 – Both Session
- 24 – Both Session
- 25 – Both Session

March -----

- 2 – Both Session
- 3 – Both Session
- 4 – Both Session
- 5 – Senate Session; **Sen Committee Deadline**
- 9 – Both Session
- 10 – Both Session
- 11 – Both Session
- 12 – Both Session; **Hse Committee Deadline**
- 15 – Senate Session
- 16 – Both Session
- 17 – *St. Patrick's Day*; Both Session
- 18 – Both Session
- 19 – Senate Session; **Sen 3rd Reading Deadline**

March cont...

- 22 – House Session
- 23 – Both Session
- 24 – Both Session (*Per HB 1409 & SB 1425-both pending- alternative date for Governor's Budget Address*)
- 25 – Both Session
- 26 – House Session; **Hse 3rd Reading Deadline**
- 29 – *Passover*; House Perfunctory

- 29 **thru** 31 – Spring Break

April -----

- 1 **thru** 9 – Spring Break
- 4 – *Easter Sunday*
- 7 – Senate Perfunctory

- 13 – Both Session
- 14 – Both Session
- 15 – Both Session
- 20 – Both Session
- 21 – Both Session
- 22 – Both Session
- 23 – Both Session; **Hse Committee Deadline SBs; & Sen Committee Deadline HBs**
- 27 – Both Session
- 28 – Both Session
- 29 – Both Session
- 30 – Both Session

May -----

- 1 – Both Session (Saturday)
- 2 – Both Session (Sunday)
- 3 – Both Session
- 4 – Both Session
- 5 – *Cinco de Mayo*; Both Session
- 6 – Both Session
- 7 – Both Session; Projected ADJOURNMENT date; **Hse 3rd Reading Deadline of SBs & Sen 3rd Reading Deadline of HBs**
- 10 **thru** 14 – Both Session - if needed
- 17 **thru** 21 – Both Session - if needed
- 24 **thru** 31 – Both Session - if needed
- 31 – *Memorial Day* *; **Constitutional Deadline** for simple majority vote on bills with immediate effective dates

* *State Holiday*

All House & Senate deadline dates are for substantive (non-appropriation) bills only.



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