

2011-K703

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating Labor Day, Monday, September 5, 2011, in the State of New York

WHEREAS, Working Americans are the foundation of our Nation's continued economic success and prosperity; and

WHEREAS, Labor Day is our Nation's official commemoration of its workers' contributions to national strength, prosperity and well-being; this observance was created by the labor movement in the late 19th Century and became a federal holiday in 1894; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate Labor Day, Monday, September 5, 2011, in the State of New York; traditionally marking the end of summer, Labor Day is celebrated in the United States on the first Monday of each September; and

WHEREAS, During the late 1800s, at the height of the Industrial Revolution in the United States, the average American worked 12-hour days and seven-day weeks in order to earn a basic living; and

WHEREAS, Despite restrictions in some states, children as young as five or six years-old, worked in mills, factories and mines across the country, earning a fraction of their adult counterparts' wages; and

WHEREAS, People of all ages, particularly the very poor and recent immigrants, often faced extremely unsafe working conditions, with insufficient access to fresh air, sanitary facilities and breaks; and

WHEREAS, As manufacturing increasingly supplanted agriculture as the wellspring of American employment, labor unions, which had first appeared in the late 18th Century, grew more prominent and vocal; they began organizing strikes and rallies to protest poor conditions and compel employers to renegotiate hours and pay; and

WHEREAS, Many of these events turned violent during this period, including the infamous Haymarket Riot of 1886, in which several Chicago

policemen and workers were killed; others gave rise to long-standing traditions: on September 5, 1882, 10,000 workers took unpaid time off to march from City Hall to Union Square in New York City, holding the first Labor Day parade in United States history; and

WHEREAS, The idea of a "workingmen's holiday" caught on in other industrial centers across the country, and many states passed legislation recognizing it; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress would not legalize the holiday until 12 years later, when a watershed moment in American labor history brought workers' rights squarely into the public's view; and

WHEREAS, On May 11, 1894, employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company in Chicago went on strike to protest wage cuts and the firing of union representatives; on June 26th, the American Railroad Union, led by Eugene V. Debs, called for a boycott of all Pullman railway cars, crippling railroad traffic nationwide; and

WHEREAS, To break the strike, the federal government dispatched troops to Chicago, unleashing a wave of riots that resulted in the deaths of more than a dozen workers; in the wake of this massive unrest and in an attempt to repair ties with American workers, Congress passed an act making Labor Day a legal holiday in the District of Columbia and the territories; and

WHEREAS, More than 100 years later, the true founder of Labor Day has yet to be identified; many credit Peter J. McGuire, co-founder of the American Federation of Labor, while others have suggested that Matthew Maguire, a secretary of the Central Labor Union, first proposed the holiday; and

WHEREAS, Today, Labor Day is still celebrated in cities and towns across the United States with parades, picnics, barbecues, fireworks displays and other public gatherings; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body, representing the people from the State of New York, to recognize and commend national

observances which display the well-deserved respect of our American workforce and praises its strong contributions to the continued success of our Nation's economy, embodying the spirit of the principles upon which this Nation was founded; now, therefore, be it
RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate Labor Day, Monday, September 5, 2011, in the State of New York.