



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0419-2018, Version: *

Res. No. 419

Resolution recognizing February 16th annually as Lithuania Independence Day in the City of New York.

By Council Members Holden, Van Bramer, Gjonaj, Ulrich, Vallone and Rivera

Whereas, Lithuania, the southernmost of Europe's Baltic states, is situated west of Belarus, between Latvia and Russia, bordering the Baltic Sea; and

Whereas, Lithuanian lands were first united around 1236 until 1569, when Lithuania and Poland formally united into a single dual state, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; and

Whereas, The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth existed until 1795 when its remnants were partitioned by surrounding countries, the bulk of which was assumed by Russia; and

Whereas, Lithuania remained a part of the Russian Empire when the Great Seimas of Vilnius, a major assembly held in December 1905 in Vilnius, Lithuania, convened following violent clashes between demonstrators and government troops to demand political autonomy within the Russian Empire; and

Whereas, In April 1915, German troops launched a military offensive against Russian troops in western Lithuania, and captured Vilnius in September 1915; and

Whereas, Lithuania remained under German military occupation during World War I until February 16, 1918, when the Council of Lithuania signed the Act of Independence of Lithuania, which restored it as an independent state; and

Whereas, Despite recognizing Lithuania's independence under the Treaty of Moscow in 1920, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ("Soviet Union" or "USSR") invaded Lithuania and compelled the country to be incorporated into the USSR in 1940; and

Whereas, In 1941, the USSR carried out mass arrests and deported thousands of Lithuanians, who were deemed to be harboring anti-Soviet attitudes, to Siberian labor camps and other forced settlements in remote parts of the Soviet Union; and

Whereas, Early on during World War II (WWII), on June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union and occupied Lithuania, which was then incorporated into a German civilian administration covering the Baltic states and western Belorussia; and

Whereas, Shortly before and immediately after the arrival of German forces, Lithuanians carried out violent riots against both Lithuanian and refugee Jews, who had comprised about 10 percent of Lithuania's population; and

Whereas, By the end of WWII, an estimated 90 to 96 percent of Lithuanian Jews had been murdered - one of the highest victim rates in Europe; and

Whereas, In the summer of 1944, the Soviet Union reoccupied Lithuania and continued to deport and imprison hundreds of thousands of Lithuanians; and

Whereas, Between 1944 and 1990, Lithuania remained under Soviet occupation rule until March 11, 1990, when Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to proclaim its independence from the USSR as the Republic of Lithuania; and

Whereas, In response to Lithuania asserting its independence, the USSR imposed oil embargoes and an economic blockade against the state, and eventually killing protesting civilians amid tense negotiations; and

Whereas, The United States (U.S.) first established diplomatic relations with Lithuania on July 28, 1922, when a U.S. representative to Lithuania was stationed at a legation in Riga, Latvia until May 31, 1930 when the legation in present-day Kaunas, Lithuania was established; and

Whereas, Though the Soviet invasion and annexation of Lithuania in 1940 forced the closure of the American legation, the U.S. never recognized the forcible incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union and Lithuanian representation in the United States continued uninterrupted; and

Whereas, On September 2, 1991, the U.S. recognized the restoration of Lithuania’s independence; and

Whereas, Since Lithuania regained its independence, and its accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union in 2004, it has become a strong and effective partner committed to U.S. objectives in the area of democracy promotion; and

Whereas, New York City (NYC) has been home to many Lithuanians and Lithuanian-Americans, including filmmaker, poet and artist Jonas Mekas and modern artist Jurgis Mačiūnas; and

Whereas, NYC is also home to Lithuania Square, a triangular patch of land in Brooklyn dedicated to the memory of two Lithuanian-Americans, Steponas “Stephen” Darius and Stasys “Stanley” Girenas, who attempted to fly nonstop from New York to Lithuania in 1933; and

Whereas, The 2016 American Community Survey, of the U.S. Census Bureau, estimates that 1,705 Lithuanian-born residents reside in NYC; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York recognizes February 16th annually as Lithuania Independence Day in the City of New York.

LS #6221
05/10/2018
CGR