

MICHIGAN SENATE

Senate Resolution No. 63

Offered by Senators Victory, Chang, Cherry and Santana

A RESOLUTION TO RECOGNIZE JUNE 23, 2023, AS "ROSEN RYE DAY"

WHEREAS, Michigan's food and agriculture system is a major contributor to income and employment in the state's economy, accounting for over \$100 billion in direct, indirect, and induced economic activity and over 800,000 jobs; and

WHEREAS, Since its admission to the union in 1837, Michigan has been an important producer of cereal grains including wheat, corn, and rye. In 1909, a new rye varietal was brought to Michigan Agricultural College (MAC) from Russia by Joseph Rosen and subsequently cleaned, selected, and propagated by Professor Frank Spragg; and

WHEREAS, It was determined conclusively that Rosen Rye vastly outperformed common varieties and that its cultivation become a priority for Michigan's agricultural community; and

WHEREAS, Beginning in 1917, significant exports of "Certified" Rosen Rye seeded around the world, notably to major whiskey-producing regions of the United States. By 1920, Michigan was the nation's largest producer of rye; and

WHEREAS, It became apparent that, despite universal acclaim, Rosen Rye crops diminished in quality from year to year due to cross-pollination from contact with common rye. A decisive action needed to be taken to isolate the finest seed-stock and protect the innovations and investment of Michigan's agricultural community. In turn, a survey was formed to determine suitable, isolated areas and South Manitou Island was found to be ideal; and

WHEREAS, George and Louis Hutzler, along with Irvin Beck, led all seven farms on South Manitou Island and formed a mutual pact, swearing under penalty of drowning, to grow only Rosen Rye to protect its genetic purity. Over the following decade, they earned numerous international awards for "Certified" Rosen Rye, garnering the farmers the moniker "Rye Kings" and Manitou Island as the "World's Rye Center"; and

WHEREAS, Between the dawn of Prohibition, and the 1960s when the last farmers left South Manitou Island, Michigan Rosen Rye was venerated in whiskey advertisements, extolled in internal distillery production manuals, and raised to legendary status in bootlegging folklore, before completely disappearing from the market for 50 years; and

WHEREAS, Under permit from the National Park Service, using seeds from the United States Department of Agriculture Seed Bank, along with assistance from Michigan State University's Department of Bio Ag Research and volunteer descendants of the Hutzler and Beck families, Mammoth Distilling has revived these historic farms to reintroduce "Certified" Rosen Rye; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, That the members of this legislative body recognize June 23, 2023, as "Rosen Rye Day"; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we recognize the critical role of native grains and locally grown agriculture to the success of the craft spirits industry in Michigan.

Adopted by the Senate, June 27, 2023.


Secretary of the Senate