



# House of Representatives

General Assembly

**File No. 548**

January Session, 2023

House Joint Resolution No. 34

*House of Representatives, April 12, 2023*

The Committee on Judiciary reported through REP. STAFSTROM of the 129th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the joint resolution ought to be adopted.

## **RESOLUTION CONCERNING CERTAIN WITCHCRAFT CONVICTIONS IN COLONIAL CONNECTICUT.**

Resolved by this Assembly:

1       WHEREAS, the courts in the early colonies of Connecticut and New  
2 Haven indicted at least thirty-four women and men for the alleged  
3 crime of witchcraft and convicted twelve of them, executing eleven, and  
4 it is now accepted by the historical profession and society as a whole  
5 that all the accused were innocent of such charges, and

6       WHEREAS, legal procedures differed at the time and many practices  
7 of the court would no longer meet modern standards of proof, so that  
8 the miscarriage of justice was facilitated by such procedures, and

9       WHEREAS, the status of women was radically different than it is  
10 today, and misogyny played a large part in the trials and in denying  
11 defendants their rights and dignity, and

12       WHEREAS, community strife and panic combined with  
13 overwhelming fear and superstition led to these accusations of alleged  
14 witchcraft and the subsequent suffering of those accused.

15 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that all of the formally  
16 convicted and executed are exonerated of all alleged crimes relating to  
17 the charges of witchcraft. The legislature proclaims the innocence of the  
18 following convicted and executed people: Alice Young in 1647, Mary  
19 Johnson in 1648, Joan Carrington in 1651, John Carrington in 1651,  
20 Goodwife Bassett in 1651, Goodwife Knapp in 1653, Lydia Gilbert in  
21 1654, Mary Sanford in 1662, Nathaniel Greensmith in 1663, Rebecca  
22 Greensmith in 1663, and Mary Barnes in 1663; and one Elizabeth Seager  
23 convicted and reprieved in 1665.

24 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that those who were indicted, forced  
25 to flee, banished or even acquitted continued to live with their  
26 reputations destroyed and their family names tarnished, will have their  
27 reputations restored and no longer have disgrace attached to their  
28 names, now, being in good standing in Connecticut. The following  
29 indicted who were not convicted but still suffered greatly after  
30 indictments were: Goodwife Bailey in 1655, Nicholas Bailey in 1655,  
31 Elizabeth Godman in 1655, Elizabeth Garlick in 1658, Unknown person  
32 in Saybrook in 1659, Margaret Jennings in 1661, Nicholas Jennings in  
33 1661, Judith Varlet in 1662, Andrew Sanford in 1662, William Ayers in  
34 1662, Judith Ayers in 1662, James Wakely in 1662, Katherine Harrison in  
35 1668 and 1669, William Graves in 1667, Elizabeth Clawson in 1692,  
36 Hugh Crosia in 1692, Mercy Disborough in 1692, Mary Harvey in 1692,  
37 Hannah Harvey in 1692, Mary Staples in 1692, Winifred Benham in 1697,  
38 and Winifred Benham Jr. in 1697.

39 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the State of Connecticut  
40 apologizes to the descendants of all those who were indicted, convicted  
41 and executed and for the harm done to the accused persons' posterity to  
42 the present day, and acknowledges the trauma and shame that  
43 wrongfully continued to affect the families of the accused.

**JUD**      *Joint Favorable*

*The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.*

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**OFA Fiscal Note****State Impact:** None**Municipal Impact:** None**Explanation**

This resolution expresses contrition for colonial action as such it does not result in a fiscal impact.

**The Out Years****State Impact:** None**Municipal Impact:** None

**OLR Bill Analysis**

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**RESOLUTION CONCERNING CERTAIN WITCHCRAFT  
CONVICTIONS IN COLONIAL CONNECTICUT.**

**SUMMARY**

The Office of Legislative Research does not analyze Resolutions.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 28 Nay 9 (03/27/2023)