



General Assembly

**House Joint
Resolution No. 34**

January Session, 2023

LCO No. 3692



Referred to Committee on JUDICIARY

Introduced by:
(JUD)

**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,

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.