ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION
No. 88

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
217th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED APRIL 4, 2016

Sponsored by:
Assemblyman VINCENT MAZZEO
District 2 (Atlantic)
Assemblyman BOB ANDRZEJCAK
District 1 (Atlantic, Cape May and Cumberland)
Assemblywoman MARIA RODRIGUEZ-GREGG
District 8 (Atlantic, Burlington and Camden)

SYNOPSIS
Commemorates 100th anniversary of world’s first commercial blueberry crop grown in Whitesbog, NJ.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.
A JOINT RESOLUTION commemorating the 100th anniversary of the
world’s first commercial blueberry crop grown in Whitesbog,
New Jersey.

WHEREAS, The highbush blueberry (Vaccinium corymbosum), which
makes up the majority of blueberries found in supermarkets around
the world, is indigenous to New Jersey and thrives in the sandy,
acidic soils of the Pinelands; and

WHEREAS, Early on, Native Americans recognized the health benefits
of these blueberries, using them for both food and medicinal
purposes, though early farmers believed the berries could not be
domesticated; and

WHEREAS, In the late nineteenth century, Elizabeth White, the
daughter of a prominent New Jersey cranberry farmer, saw great
potential in adding blueberries to the family crop; and

WHEREAS, In 1911, White read a report on blueberry cultivation by
Frederick Coville, a botanist at the United States Department of
Agriculture, and invited Coville to partner with her and use her
family farm for his experiments; and

WHEREAS, Together, White and Coville began studying,
domesticating, and breeding wild highbush blueberry plants in
order to create berries suitable for commercial production; and

WHEREAS, White hired local residents who knew the forests to go out
and collect 100 blueberry bushes with the largest berries, and
Coville used these bushes to cross-pollinate them, collect seeds, and
select new bushes from among the offspring that produced larger
berries; and

WHEREAS, In 1916, White and Coville harvested and sold the first
commercial crop of plump, juicy, and sweet highbush blueberries,
and soon thereafter, blueberry fever swept the country; and

WHEREAS, Today, dozens of commercial highbush blueberry varieties
are grown across the United States, Canada, South America, and
around the world, ensuring that fresh blueberries are available to
consumers year-round; and

WHEREAS, In 2014, global production of blueberries reached one
billion pounds, and blueberries are found in nearly 4,000
commercial products, such as pies, teas, and muffins; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey is consistently among the top-five producers of
blueberries in the nation, producing 66.7 million pounds of
blueberries, worth an estimated $80 million, annually; and

WHEREAS, the State’s blueberries are grown on 254 farms, spanning
8,800 acres, the vast majority of which are located in and around
the Town of Hammonton in Atlantic County; and

WHEREAS, Hammonton is widely recognized as the “blueberry capital
of the world” due to its output of berries, but also due to its soil,
weather, and geographic location in the Pinelands, which make it
ideal for growing blueberries; and
WHEREAS, In 2003, the State Legislature passed P.L.2003, c.245, designating the highbush blueberry as the New Jersey State Fruit; and

WHEREAS, It is altogether fitting and proper that the Legislature commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first commercial production of this delicious and nutritious native fruit; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. The State of New Jersey recognizes and commemorates the 100th anniversary of the world’s first commercial blueberry crop grown in Whitesbog, in the Browns Mills area of Pemberton Township, New Jersey, and celebrates the legacy of this delicious and nutritious native fruit.

2. The Governor shall issue a proclamation calling upon public officials, public schools, and the citizens of the State to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first commercial blueberry crop with appropriate activities and programs.

3. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State, shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly or the Secretary of the Senate to the New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture, the New Jersey Commissioner of Education, the Mayors of Pemberton Township and Hammonton, New Jersey, the Whitesbog Preservation Trust, the New Jersey Agricultural Society, the New Jersey Farm Bureau, and the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council.

4. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This joint resolution would commemorate the 100th anniversary of the world’s first commercial blueberry crop, grown in Whitesbog, New Jersey.

The highbush blueberry is indigenous to New Jersey and thrives in the sandy, acidic soils of the Pinelands. Early on, Native Americans recognized the health benefits of blueberries, using them for food and medicine, though early farmers believed the berries could not be domesticated. However, in the late nineteenth century, Elizabeth White, the daughter of a prominent New Jersey cranberry farmer, saw great potential in adding blueberries to the family crop. In 1911, White read a report on blueberry cultivation by Frederick Coville, a botanist at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and
invited Coville to partner with her and use her family farm for his experiments. Together, White and Coville began studying, domesticating, and breeding wild highbush blueberry plants in order to create berries suitable for commercial production. In 1916, White and Coville harvested and sold the first commercial crop of blueberries, and soon thereafter, blueberry fever swept the country. Today, dozens of commercial highbush blueberry varieties are grown across the United States and around the world. In 2014, global production of blueberries reached one billion pounds, and blueberries are found in nearly 4,000 commercial products. New Jersey is consistently among the top-five producers of blueberries in the nation, and Hammonton, New Jersey is widely recognized as the “blueberry capital of the world.”

The resolution would also direct the Governor to issue a proclamation calling upon public officials, public schools, and the citizens of the State to commemorate the anniversary with appropriate activities and programs.