



Office of the Chicago City  
Clerk



R2012-216

Office of the City Clerk

City Council Document Tracking Sheet

**Meeting Date:** 2/15/2012  
**Sponsor(s):** Burke, Edward M. (14)  
**Type:** Resolution  
**Title:** Commemoration of 50th anniversary of dyeing Chicago  
River green  
**Committee(s) Assignment:**

## *RESOLUTION*

*WHEREAS*, For fifty years, the Chicago River has been dyed green to celebrate St. Patrick's Day, a tradition which carries significant meaning for the thousands of Chicagoans whose family trees took root in Ireland; and

*WHEREAS*, The Chicago City Council has been informed of this anniversary by Alderman Edward M. Burke; and

*WHEREAS*, On the Saturday nearest to St. Patrick's Day each year, forty pounds of powdered vegetable dye are deposited into the Chicago River, turning it a brilliant shade of emerald green; and

*WHEREAS*, This annual tradition is sponsored by the Chicago Journeymen Plumbers Union; and

*WHEREAS*, During the early years, the river was dyed green by Thomas Rowan, Sr. and Michael Butler; and

*WHEREAS*, The annual tradition is continued today by Michael Butler, Mark Butler, Thomas Rowan, Jr. and Robert Rowan; and

*WHEREAS*, Only the select few who actually participate in the dyeing process are privy to the formula which results in that perfect Irish green; and

*WHEREAS*, Dyeing the Chicago River green was the brainchild of Stephen M. Bailey, a business manager for the Chicago Journeymen Plumbers Local Union #110 for much of the 1960s; and

*WHEREAS*, In late 1961, Stephen M. Bailey discovered that the dye used by his plumbers to detect leaks into the Chicago River could also dye that same river a perfect shade of Irish green and a tradition was born; and

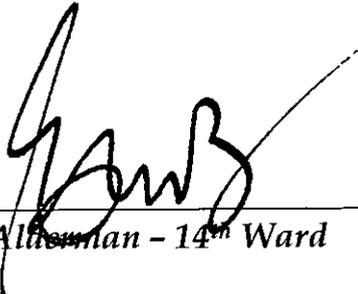
*WHEREAS*, Chicago was the first city ever to attempt such a transformation, and is believed to be the only municipality to successfully performed the feat year after year; and

**WHEREAS**, In keeping with the traditions of her native city, First Lady Michelle Obama requested in 2009 that the White House fountains be dyed green in observance of St. Patrick's Day; and

**WHEREAS**, Chicagoans of Irish descent are fond of saying that the dye which goes into the Chicago River each year travels to the Illinois River, then to the Mississippi, and then to the Gulf of Mexico before crossing the North Atlantic to the Irish Sea where it serves as a greeting to the Irish from their kinfolk in Chicago; now, therefore

**BE IT RESOLVED**, That we, the Mayor and the members of the Chicago City Council, assembled this fifteenth day of February, 2012, do hereby congratulate Michael Butler, Mark Butler, Thomas Rowan, Jr. and Robert Rowan on this fifty-year tradition and do hereby express our appreciation to them for helping all Chicagoans celebrate St. Patrick's Day by dyeing the Chicago River green; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to Michael Butler, Mark Butler, Thomas Rowan, Jr. and Robert Rowan.



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Allanman - 14<sup>th</sup> Ward