



# Office of the City Clerk

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## Legislation Text

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Public Safety

### ORDER

WHEREAS, at 4:14 p.m. on May 19, 1934, Engine Company 59 responded to a fire at the Union Stock Yards on Chicago's south side; and

WHEREAS, when Engine 59 arrived on the scene, the blaze was so substantial that the firefighters abandoned their engine as it was being destroyed by flames; and

WHEREAS, after 14 alarms had sounded, 103 companies comprised of 103 pumpers and 22 trucks arrived to battle the persistent flames; and

WHEREAS, approximately 2,200 Chicago and suburban firefighters reported to battle the fire, deploying nearly five-sixths of the Chicago Fire Department's equipment; and

WHEREAS, during the fire, Company 59's quarters were destroyed and those firefighters were commanded to report to Company 39 (1618 West 33<sup>rd</sup> Street); and

WHEREAS, through the heroic efforts of the firefighters, approximately four hours after the initial alarm had sounded, the flames that once covered an estimated eight city blocks were reduced to almost nothing; and

WHEREAS, nearly 150 families became homeless as the result of the fire; and

WHEREAS, at one point during the battle, the fire became so large that passengers on a United Airlines plane flying over South Bend, Indiana, located 95 miles away from Chicago, noticed the clouds of smoke covering the city; and

WHEREAS, during the fire, firefighters became extremely dehydrated and overheated; and

WHEREAS, the firefighters began to drink polluted water from a 2,000,000 gallon reservoir that was not normally used for drinking; and

WHEREAS, seventy firefighters would become very ill, many of whom contracted typhoid fever; and

WHEREAS, firefighter Thomas F. Garry fought the Union Stock Yards fire as a member of Engine 88; and

WHEREAS, firefighter Garry entered the Chicago Fire Department on November 19, 1917; and

WHEREAS, firefighter Garry died from typhoid on October 25, 1934 at the age of 45, five months after drinking the polluted water at the Stock Yards; and

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WHEREAS, firefighter Garry was widowed at the time of his death and left behind five children; and

WHEREAS, firefighter Garry's grandson is James T. Joyce, who served as the Commissioner of the Chicago Fire Department from 1999 until his retirement in 2004, following 34 years of service to the residents of Chicago as a member of the Chicago Fire Department; and

WHEREAS, firefighter Robert J. Klasek fought the Union Stock Yards fire as a member of Truck 8; and

WHEREAS, firefighter Klasek entered the Chicago Fire Department on April 27, 1928; and

WHEREAS, firefighter Klasek died from typhoid on December 6, 1934, seven months after drinking the polluted water at the Stock Yards; and

WHEREAS, firefighter Garry and Firefighter Klasek are not included among the 558 members of the Chicago Fire Department who made the ultimate sacrifice; NOW THEREFORE

**BE IT ORDERED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO:**

Alderman, 14th Ward

That the Commissioner of the Chicago Fire Department is hereby ordered to recognize the deaths of Firefighter Thomas F. Garry and Firefighter Robert J. Klasek as line of duty deaths attributed to their service in combating the Union Stock Yards Fire of May 19, 1934 and to honor their sacrifices with all appropriate tributes and commemorations.

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