

Presentation in Support of Senate Bill 21

Establishing October 4th as “Rutherford B. Hayes Day”

Sponsored by Senator Brenner and Senator Reineke

January 29, 2025

“Chairman Manchester, Vice Chairman Brenner, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the Government Oversight and Reform Committee, good morning and thank you for this opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Senate Bill 21.

My name is Bill Rietz and I am representing the RB Hayes Heritage, a 501(c) (3) organization based in the city of Delaware.

Our mission is to bring appropriate recognition to, and educate the community about, the 19th president of the United States and Delaware’s native son, Rutherford B. Hayes.

Our goal with this presentation is to provide clear evidence showing why we believe that October 4th should be declared “Rutherford B. Hayes Day” in the State of Ohio.

Rutherford Birchard Hayes, (born in Delaware three months after his father had died), was a lawyer, a Civil War Veteran, and a politician. He served as the 19th president of the United States from 1877 to 1881, after serving in the U.S. House of Representatives and as governor of Ohio for three terms.

Hayes attended Kenyon College in Gambier graduating as Valedictorian (by the way he often walked to school - Delaware to Gambier – a distance of 38 miles! After Kenyon he attended Harvard Law School where he earned his Juris Doctorate degree.

After Harvard Law he took work in Fremont and then Cincinnati – where he served as a criminal defense attorney. His work included defending fugitive slaves. Rosetta Armstead was his most notable case that earned the defendant her freedom.

At the start of the Civil War, the 39-year-old Hayes left his fledgling legal and political career and volunteered with the 23rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry here in Columbus. He was sworn in as a Major in 1861. He served with the 23rd throughout the war. Hayes earned a reputation

for leading from the front and exhibiting unusual bravery in the face of the enemy. By war's end Hayes had been breveted to Major General. Hayes was wounded five times, and he had four horses shot out from under him. He was recognized by General Ulysses Grant for both his leadership and his heroism.

Hayes was a Lincoln supporter and strong abolitionist. He was appointed and later elected Cincinnati Solicitor. He served in the US House of Representatives from Ohio for 2 terms and was the first to be elected Ohio Governor 3 times. During his time as Governor, suffrage was expanded, as he was able to secure Ohio's ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which guaranteed black male suffrage. Governor Hayes was also responsible for starting a state Agricultural and Mechanical College in 1870. Today we know that school as "The Ohio State University!"

As the third President from Ohio, Hayes inherited the waning years of Reconstruction and attempted to reconcile the divisions left over from the Civil War. The Hayes administration was influenced by his belief in equal treatment without regard to wealth, social standing, or race.

President Hayes was asked by the country of Paraguay to arbitrate a land dispute that came about after they were defeated in a war with Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay and they had lost their sovereign territory. In 1878 Hayes found in favor of Paraguay and awarded them 60 percent of their former land. In gratitude, Paraguay today has a national holiday, a province, a town, a museum, schools and a soccer team all named to honor Hayes.

It has been written that, as President, his greatest achievement was to restore popular faith in the presidency following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

In retirement Hayes was dedicated to serving the public as a private citizen and philanthropist, the ex-president delivered numerous speeches and patriotic addresses, he championed many educational, humanitarian, and reform causes.

Continuing to manifest an interest in education, Hayes served as a trustee of Ohio State University, Western Reserve University, Ohio Wesleyan University, and Mount Union College.

Rutherford B. Hayes overcame a great deal of hardship establishing a strong legacy. His was a life lived to its fullest!

This journey to recognize Delaware's native son began in May of 2022 with the help of Senator's Brenner and Reineke. Our hope is to have Senate Bill 21 approved by the General Assembly and signed by Governor DeWine in 2025.

Thank you for your consideration in support of recognizing October 4th as "Rutherford B. Hayes Day."