



Legislation Details (With Text)

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**Effective date:**

**Title:** NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh does hereby declare 2011 to be "The Year of A. Leo Weil" in the City of Pittsburgh.

**Sponsors:** Darlene M. Harris, All Members

**Indexes:** PROCLAMATION - MRS. HARRIS

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**Attachments:** 1. 2011-1277.doc

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
1/4/2011	1	City Council	Adopted	Pass

**WHEREAS,** Pittsburgher **A. Leo Weil** wrote, and presented on June 24, 1908, to the Pennsylvania Bar Association,

“Who would not wish to be proud of his city; to boast of the honesty and efficiency of its government; to point to its civic advancement and betterment; to speak with pride of the public officers' devotion to the public service; to believe that the public moneys were applied for the public's good; to know that the city's property was conserved for the city's use; to realize that the people's rights were safe with the people; to be assured that the people's will was obeyed by the people's choice; to feel a civic consciousness of love and pride and confidence in the greatness and goodness and accomplishment of his city . . . . ?”

**WHEREAS,** **A. Leo Weil** became a lawyer in 1879, practicing initially as an oil and gas lawyer when Pittsburgh was just becoming a center for refining oil; and **Mr. Weil** built a house in 1898 at the corner of Howe Street and Highland Avenue; and

**WHEREAS,** **Mr. Weil** was one of the founding members of Rodef Shalom Temple, and his grandmother served as president of the Columbia Council (now the National Council of Jewish Women); and

**WHEREAS,** **Mr. Weil** served prominently as a member of the executive committee of the Voters' Civic League; and

**WHEREAS,** **A. Leo Weil** wrote “In the City of Pittsburgh, immediately upon the grant of a franchise to build a street railway on Grant Boulevard, the value of the franchise was appraised by street railway experts at \$3,000,000. The city received not one cent for this grant. The value of the franchises in the cities of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, granted without compensation to the city, would . . . far exceed the public debt of those cities; probably would amount to more than double such public debts”; and

**WHEREAS**, it was **Mr. Weil** who stopped council members from making Grant Boulevard (which became Bigelow Boulevard) into a railway; and

**WHEREAS**, a few years later, **Mr. Weil** was a moving force behind the cleanup of the City depositories bank scandal (with help he personally entreated from President Theodore Roosevelt) and, working with a private investigator from Scranton and District Attorney Blakely in 1910, he assisted in the prosecution of city councilmen, bankers, industrialists, and others for graft and related offenses, sending many of them to the penitentiary; and

**WHEREAS**, **Mr. Weil** went on to quote Lincoln Steffens about how control in Pittsburgh was obtained and by which the city and its citizens were robbed, saying

“The idea of the Boss 'was not to corrupt the city, but to be it; not to hire votes in councils, but to own councilmen; and so, having seized control of his organization, he nominated cheap or dependent men for select and common councils. Relatives and friends were his first recourse, then came bartenders, saloonkeepers, liquor dealers, and others allied to the vices, who were subject to police regulation and dependent in a business way upon the maladministration of law. For the rest he preferred men who had no visible means of support and to maintain them he used the usual means, patronage....”

and

**WHEREAS**, subsequently, in 1911, the Select and Common Councils were replaced with a nine-member council, as we have today;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh does hereby declare **2011** to be “**The Year of A. Leo Weil**” in the City of Pittsburgh.