

Senators Meekhof, Jansen, Kowall, Robertson, Hildenbrand, Moolenaar, Schuitmaker, Proos and Hansen offered the following resolution:

**Senate Resolution No. 81.**

A resolution to offer wholehearted support for keeping a Dutch Consulate General Office in the Midwest region of the United States to ensure the continued growth of ethnic, cultural, and economic ties between Michigan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Whereas, For over 400 years, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the United States have had a strong diplomatic, cultural, and economic relationship. The relationship helped the establishment of the Dutch Consulate General Office in Chicago, which provides a wide array of consular services to a fourteen-state region, including Michigan; and

Whereas, In June 2013, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs announced a Modernization of the Dutch Foreign Service plan which includes the proposed closing of five consulate general offices around the world, including Chicago, Osaka, Munich, Milan, and Antwerp; and

Whereas, The Midwest region is home to over one million Americans of Dutch ancestry, for which the state of Michigan is honored to be the home to over half a million of those citizens; and

Whereas, The significant size of the Dutch-descendant population makes it very special from an ethnic and cultural point of view. It also makes the relationship between the Midwest region of the United States and the Kingdom of the Netherlands one of critical importance to foster. So significant is the Dutch influence in Michigan that a large number of cities in Western Michigan were founded and named by Dutch immigrants; and

Whereas, In April 2013, the Lieutenant Governor of Michigan, state legislative leaders, and many members of Michigan's business, educational, and cultural community attended the state's first trade mission to the Netherlands, which was instituted with the assistance of the Dutch Consulate General in Chicago and the West Michigan Global Initiative. The trade mission was instrumental in expanding the political and business ties of both regions in order to build on an already-strong relationship foundation; and

Whereas, Dutch exports to the Midwest region of the United States are three times the size of those exports to Canada or India. In terms of economic relations with the Netherlands, the Midwest is critical. A full 27 percent of Dutch exports to the U.S. are destined for Illinois, Ohio, and Michigan. For Michigan, the Netherlands is a significantly strong and growing export market; and

Whereas, The relationship is so important that the Michigan Legislature has formed a bipartisan legislative Dutch Caucus, for which its members actively support economic and cultural engagement and strongly encourage that the Kingdom of the Netherlands maintain a diplomatic mission and presence in Michigan and the Midwest region; and

Whereas, The closure of the Dutch Consulate General Office in the Midwest region would have a negative effect on the growing economic activity, and it would adversely impact the special relationship that exists between Michigan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The state of Michigan offers assistance to find a solution that will allow the special relationship to flourish; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That we memorialize the Kingdom of the Netherlands to strongly reconsider the proposed closing of the Dutch Consulate General Office in Chicago. Furthermore, we

request that the Kingdom of the Netherlands retain a strong diplomatic presence in the Midwest region of the United States for generations to come; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, the States-General of the Netherlands, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.