

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 42

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 144

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 42—Relative to Christianity in Armenia.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 26, 2001.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 42, Poochigian. 1700th Anniversary of acceptance of Christianity in Armenia.

This measure would acknowledge the significant contribution the Armenian Church has made to the fabric of life of all peoples of California, and would congratulate the Republic of Armenia on the occasion of the 1700th Anniversary of the acceptance of Christianity in Armenia.

WHEREAS, In the first century A.D., two of the apostles of Jesus Christ, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, brought the light of Christianity to the Armenian nation; and

WHEREAS, In the year 301 A.D., Armenia became the first nation to officially adopt, embrace, and proclaim Christianity as its state religion with the conversion and baptism of King Trdat by St. Gregory the Illuminator, the First Catholicos of All Armenians; and

WHEREAS, In 451 A.D., under the leadership of St. Vartan Mamigonian, the Armenian nation fought against a powerful neighboring empire. While the vastly outnumbered Armenians lost on the battlefield, they were the ultimate victors in the struggle for freedom of their religion and of their national identity. The Battle of Avarayr, the first recorded war in defense of Christianity, became a spiritual victory for the Armenian nation as the neighboring kings henceforth recognized the Armenian claims for freedom of worship. On the eve of the battle, the Armenian soldiers led by St. Vartan received Holy Communion together. St. Vartan and the 1,036 soldiers martyred at Avarayr are held in special respect as saints of the Church by the Armenian people, who continue to hold fast to their Christian faith and to their national identity in spite of centuries of foreign domination and subjugation; and

WHEREAS, The spread of the gospel among Armenians was greatly facilitated by the invention of the Armenian alphabet in 406 by Mesrob Mashdots, an Armenian monk whose work, supported by King Vramshapuh and Catholicos Sahag, allowed for the subsequent translation of the Holy Bible into Armenian over the next 30 years; and



WHEREAS, The adoption of Christianity is the single most formative factor in Armenian history, culture, and heritage; and

WHEREAS, The religious, national, and cultural identities of Armenians are so interconnected that the Armenian historian Yeghishe observed in the fifth century: “It took only 150 years, following the conversion of Armenia to the light of Christianity, that the new religion became an inseparable part of the Armenian identity”; and

WHEREAS, The devotion of the Armenian nation and people to God led them to create distinctive styles of Christian art, music, manuscript illumination, architecture, stone sculptures, and textiles, that are recognized in and have contributed to the international community; and

WHEREAS, The Armenian people have been persecuted historically by neighboring forces of religious intolerance, culminating in the Armenian Genocide (1915-23), in which the Armenian people endured unimaginable suffering, torture, and death at the hands of the Ottoman Empire; and

WHEREAS, Most recently following the independence of the Republic of Armenia after 70 years of Soviet oppression, including attempts to chill the practice of Christianity, the Armenian Church and the entire nation are experiencing a rejuvenation and spiritual rebirth in celebrating the 10th anniversary of the founding of a free and independent Republic of Armenia; and

WHEREAS, In this jubilee year of 2001, Armenians throughout the world are celebrating the 1700th Anniversary of this momentous and holy event; and

WHEREAS, More than 100 communities throughout the United States are celebrating the 1700th Anniversary of the acceptance of Christianity in Armenia with cultural events, community activities, and special worship and ecumenical services; and

WHEREAS, The 1700th Anniversary is an appropriate occasion to celebrate the ideals and values shared by those of Armenian descent in California and in the United States, as well as the people of Armenia; and

WHEREAS, For the last 100 years, the Armenian Church has established parishes throughout California and has contributed to the quality of life in this state; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature of the State of California acknowledges the significant contribution the Armenian Church has made to the fabric of life of all peoples in California, and congratulates the Republic of Armenia on the occasion of the 1700th Anniversary of the acceptance of Christianity in Armenia; and be it further



Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

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