

Senate Joint Resolution No. 15

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 31

Senate Joint Resolution No. 15—Relative to the federal poverty level.

[Filed with Secretary of State April 9, 2004.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 15, Alarcon. Federal poverty level.

This measure would memorialize the President and Congress of the United States to ensure that the United States is working to meet the basic needs of all families, to begin a process to better calculate the federal poverty level, and to use existing models to calculate poverty, including geographical costs of living.

WHEREAS, The federal poverty level was created by Congress in the 1960s to determine the number of people living in poverty; and

WHEREAS, The Census Bureau notes that the federal poverty measure is a statistical yardstick rather than a complete description of what people and families need to live; and

WHEREAS, The federal poverty level is calculated by multiplying basic food consumption by three; and

WHEREAS, The federal poverty level implies a demographic model of a two-parent family with one parent in the workforce and one parent at home; and

WHEREAS, The federal poverty level does not include the different cost of living across states, counties, and cities; and

WHEREAS, The cost of housing, health care, transportation, child care, and essential services, such as water, electricity, and gas are not included in calculating the federal poverty level; and

WHEREAS, The current 2002 federal poverty level is defined by a family unit of one with an income of \$8,860, a family unit of two with an income of \$11,940, a family unit of three with an income of \$15,020, and a family unit of four with an income of \$18,100; and

WHEREAS, The 2000 federal census reports that 14 percent of Californians live at the federal poverty level; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Diana Pearce of the University of Washington, with Wider Opportunities for Women and Californians for Family Economic Self-Sufficiency (CFESS), a project of the National Economic Development and Law Center, have developed the California Self-Sufficiency Standard, which uses major budget items and varies geographically; and



WHEREAS, Approximately 30 percent of Californians do not earn enough to pay for basic needs, according to a study utilizing the California Self-Sufficiency Standard; and

WHEREAS, It is in the best interest of the state to ensure that families have enough income to meet their basic needs; and

WHEREAS, A more accurate calculation of poverty would assist in California’s effort to end poverty; and

WHEREAS, Many California families are struggling with inadequate resources to meet their families’ basic needs, yet many of these families do not receive any assistance. Although often described as “falling between the cracks,” this group is neither small nor marginal as that phrase suggests, but, rather, is a substantial proportion of our society, and yet little is known about them; and

WHEREAS, A more accurate calculation of the federal poverty level would redirect more federal funds to states; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and Assembly of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature respectfully memorializes the President and Congress of the United States to do all of the following:

- (1) Ensure that the United States is working to meet the basic needs of all families.
- (2) Begin a process to better calculate the federal poverty level to ensure that all states receive an adequate representation of the number of families who are struggling to meet their basic needs.
- (3) Use existing models to calculate poverty, including geographical costs of living that take into account expenses such as housing, child care, health care, and transportation ; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the Senate, and to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States.

