

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 107

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 80

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 107—Relative to the CDF Firefighter John D. Guthrie Memorial Highway.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 8, 2008.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 107, Cook. CDF Firefighter John D. Guthrie Memorial Highway.

This measure would designate a specified portion of State Highway Route 215 as the "CDF Firefighter John D. Guthrie Memorial Highway." The measure would request the Department of Transportation to determine the cost of appropriate signs so designating that portion of State Highway Route 215 and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources covering the cost, to erect those signs.

WHEREAS, As a young man growing up in Perris, California, John Guthrie often volunteered to help the older men fight fires in the rural community and always wanted to be a firefighter; and

WHEREAS, After two years of service in the Navy, Guthrie returned home and signed on with the United States Forest Service as a firefighter, and, in 1954, was stationed at the El Cariso fire station; and

WHEREAS, In 1955, Guthrie was hired by the California Division of Forestry and began working at the Lake Elsinore Station; and

WHEREAS, On July 8, 1959, two teenagers driving down the curvy highway toward Lake Elsinore lost control of their truck and it flew off of the roadway and down a 200-foot embankment, sparking an inferno that became known as the Decker Canyon Fire; and

WHEREAS, More than 500 California Division of Forestry, United States Forest Service, local, and volunteer firefighters were called to fight the Decker Canyon Fire, which swept out of the hills and forced the evacuation of Lakeland Village; and

WHEREAS, Guthrie was a firetruck driver working at the fire station on Old Town Temecula, and when the call went out Guthrie and his crew headed north toward the billowing smoke; and

WHEREAS, Guthrie and his crew were sent off of the main road about a mile east of El Cariso Village into a canyon to start setting backfires and the shifting winds soon pushed a wall of flame back up the canyon toward their truck; and

WHEREAS, With the flames advancing on them, Guthrie ordered the other firefighters back to the truck for protection, despite the fact that there was not room in the truck for him; and

WHEREAS, Guthrie attempted to use a firehose to wet himself down for protection, but the firehose was burned beyond use; and

WHEREAS, The flames rushed over the firetruck, charring it and those inside and outside of it almost beyond recognition and the six-man crew perished, some at the scene and others at hospitals in the days and weeks that followed; and

WHEREAS, Twenty-seven other firefighters were injured fighting the 1,700-acre blaze, some losing ears, fingers, and noses; and

WHEREAS, Guthrie, with over 85 percent of his body burned, began walking out of the canyon before others came to his aid and an ambulance arrived to take him to the closest hospital, which was located in Hemet; and

WHEREAS, Guthrie was the last firefighter to die as a result of the blaze, finally succumbing to his injuries at Redland's hospital on September 14, 1959; and

WHEREAS, Guthrie left behind his wife Carlo and a young son and daughter; and

WHEREAS, It is vital that the sacrifice by John Guthrie and the other firefighters who were killed in the Decker Canyon Fire in order to protect the citizens of California be remembered; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby dedicates that portion of State Highway Route 215 between the Ramona Expressway Exit, at postmile 31.08, and its junction with State Route 74, at postmile 26.31, in honor of John D. Guthrie by officially designating that route as the CDF Firefighter John D. Guthrie Memorial Highway; and be it further

Resolved, That the Department of Transportation is requested to determine the cost of appropriate signs, consistent with the signing requirements for the state highway system, showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources sufficient to cover that cost, to erect those signs; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the Department of Transportation and to the author for appropriate distribution.