

Introduced by Senator Cogdill

March 13, 2008

Senate Joint Resolution No. 26—Relative to Armenian Genocide.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 26, as introduced, Cogdill. Armenian Genocide: Day of Remembrance.

This measure would designate April 24, 2008, as “California Day of Remembrance for the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923.” It would memorialize the Congress of the United States to act likewise to commemorate the Armenian Genocide.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, The Armenian people, living in their 3,000-year
2 historic homeland in eastern Asia Minor and throughout the
3 Ottoman Empire, were subjected to severe persecution and brutal
4 injustice by the rulers of the Ottoman Empire before and after the
5 turn of the 20th century, including widespread massacres,
6 usurpation of land and property, and acts of wanton destruction
7 during the period from 1894 to 1896, inclusive, and again in 1909;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, The horrible experience of the Armenians at the
10 hands of their oppressors culminated on April 24, 1915, with the
11 arrest, exile, and murder of hundreds of Armenian intellectuals,
12 and political, religious, and business leaders in what is known by
13 historians as the “First Genocide of the Twentieth Century,” and
14 as the prototype of modern day mass killing; and

15 WHEREAS, The regime then in control of the empire, known
16 as the “Young Turks,” planned and executed the unspeakable

1 atrocities committed against the Armenian people from 1915 to
2 1923, inclusive, which included the torture, starvation, and murder
3 of 1,500,000 Armenians, death marches into the Syrian Desert,
4 the forced exile of more than 500,000 innocent people, and the
5 loss of the traditional Armenian homelands; and

6 WHEREAS, While there were some Turks and others who
7 jeopardized their safety in order to protect Armenians from the
8 crimes being perpetrated by the Young Turk regime, the genocide
9 of the Armenian people constituted one of the most egregious
10 violations of human rights in the history of the world; and

11 WHEREAS, The United States Ambassador to the Ottoman
12 Empire, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., stated “Whatever crimes the most
13 perverted instincts of the human mind can devise, and whatever
14 refinements of persecutions and injustice the most debased
15 imagination can conceive, became the daily misfortunes of this
16 devoted people. I am confident that the whole history of the human
17 race contains no such horrible episode as this. The great massacres
18 and persecutions of the past seem almost insignificant when
19 compared to the sufferings of the Armenian race in 1915. The
20 killing of the Armenian people was accompanied by the systematic
21 destruction of churches, schools, libraries, treasures of art, and
22 cultural monuments in an attempt to eliminate all traces of a noble
23 civilization with a history of more than 3,000 years”; and

24 WHEREAS, Winston Churchill wrote: “As for Turkish
25 atrocities: ... massacring uncounted thousands of helpless
26 Armenians, men, women, and children together, whole districts
27 blotted out in one administrative holocaust—these were beyond
28 human redress”; and

29 WHEREAS, Contemporary newspapers like the New York
30 Times commonly carried headlines such as “Tales of Armenian
31 Horrors Confirmed,” “Million Armenians Killed or in Exile,” and
32 “Wholesale Massacre of Armenians by Turks”; and

33 WHEREAS, Adolph Hitler, in persuading his army commanders
34 on the eve of World War II that the merciless persecution and
35 killing of Poles, Jews, and other peoples would bring no retribution,
36 declared, “Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the
37 Armenians?”; and

38 WHEREAS, Unlike other peoples and governments that have
39 admitted and denounced the abuses and crimes of predecessor
40 regimes, and despite the overwhelming weight of evidence, the

1 Republic of Turkey has inexplicably and adamantly denied the
2 occurrence of the crimes against humanity committed by the Young
3 Turk rulers, and those denials compound the grief of the few
4 remaining survivors of the atrocities, desecrate the memory of the
5 victims, and cause continuing trauma and pain to the descendants
6 of the victims; and

7 WHEREAS, There have been concerted efforts to revise history
8 through the dissemination of propaganda suggesting that
9 Armenians were responsible for their fate in the period from 1915
10 to 1923, inclusive, and through the funding of programs at
11 American educational institutions for the purpose of furthering
12 this revisionism; and

13 WHEREAS, In the last several years, Turkish and Armenian
14 writers and journalists have been persecuted and criminally indicted
15 for daring to write about the Armenian Genocide, and some United
16 States political and military leaders have regrettably capitulated
17 to unseemly demands that they actively undermine efforts to gain
18 appropriate recognition of the historic fact of the Armenian
19 Genocide; and

20 WHEREAS, Leaders of nations with strategic, commercial, and
21 cultural ties to the Republic of Turkey should be reminded of their
22 duty to encourage Turkish officials to desist from efforts to distort
23 facts and deny the history of events surrounding the Armenian
24 Genocide; and

25 WHEREAS, The accelerated level and scope of denial and
26 revisionism, coupled with the passage of time and the fact that few
27 survivors remain who serve as reminders of the indescribable
28 brutality and torment, compel a sense of urgency in efforts to
29 solidify recognition and reaffirmation of historical truth; and

30 WHEREAS, By honoring the survivors, and consistently
31 remembering and forcefully condemning the atrocities committed
32 against the Armenian people as well as the persecution of the
33 Assyrian and Greek populations of the Ottoman Empire, we guard
34 against repetition of the crime of genocide; and

35 WHEREAS, California has become home to the largest
36 population of Armenians in the United States, and those citizens
37 have enriched our state through leadership in the fields of academia,
38 medicine, business, agriculture, government, and the arts, and they
39 are proud and patriotic practitioners of American citizenship; and

1 WHEREAS, California has been at the forefront in encouraging
2 and promoting a curriculum relating to human rights and genocide
3 in order to empower future generations to prevent recurrence of
4 the crime of genocide; now, therefore, be it

5 *Resolved by the Assembly and Senate of the State of California,*
6 *jointly,* That the Legislature of the State of California hereby
7 designates April 24, 2008, as the “California Day of Remembrance
8 for the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923”; and be it further

9 *Resolved,* That California commends its conscientious educators
10 who teach about human rights and genocide; and be it further

11 *Resolved,* That California respectfully memorializes the
12 Congress of the United States to act likewise and to commemorate
13 the Armenian Genocide; and be it further

14 *Resolved,* That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
15 of this resolution to the President of the United States, Members
16 of the United States Congress, and the Governor.