

Introduced by Senator Steinberg

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Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 19—Relative to Jewish American Heritage Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 19, as introduced, Steinberg. Jewish American Heritage Month. This bill would designate May 2009 as Jewish American Heritage Month.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, The earliest Jewish immigrants came to California
2 and other parts of the southwest as early as the seventeenth century,
3 fleeing persecution from the Spanish Inquisition. As “conversos,”
4 they had to practice their religion in secret to avoid detection of
5 their true religious faith by the Inquisition, which was active in
6 Spain’s New World colonies; and
7 WHEREAS, The next wave of Jewish immigration to California
8 came during the Gold Rush of 1849. Jews were among the original
9 “forty-niners,” settling in San Francisco and the gold rush towns
10 of Nevada City, Grass Valley, Jackson, and Sacramento. Most of
11 the Jewish population were immigrants from Germany and
12 Austria-Hungary; and

1 WHEREAS, Members of the pioneer Jewish community in
2 California enjoyed unprecedented freedom and social mobility to
3 pursue their dreams of independence and prosperity. Immigrants
4 such as Adolph Sutro, Levi Strauss, Isadore and Anthony
5 Zellerbach, Aaron Fleishhacker, and the Hellman family arrived
6 in gold rush California and founded some of the major business
7 enterprises of the West. Some of these businesses, like Levi Strauss
8 and Wells Fargo Bank, are now household names; and

9 WHEREAS, In the socially mobile atmosphere of frontier
10 California, the Jewish community not only prospered but
11 participated fully in the state's political life. As early as 1852,
12 Elkan Heydenfeldt and Isaac Cardozo were elected to the
13 Legislature. Solomon Heydenfeldt served as a justice on the
14 California Supreme Court. Members of the Jewish community
15 were elected mayors of numerous California cities; and

16 WHEREAS, Starting in the early twentieth century, a new wave
17 of Jewish immigrants arrived in California, mostly from the
18 countries in eastern Europe and Russia. They were fleeing religious
19 persecution and terrible poverty in their native lands and flocked
20 to the cities of the east coast. These immigrants soon began making
21 their way to the Golden State, settling in Los Angeles, San
22 Francisco, San Diego, Sacramento, and throughout the San Joaquin
23 Valley. It was in Hollywood that the motion picture industry began
24 to develop and many of its pioneers, such as Carl Laemmle, Adolph
25 Zukor, Samuel Goldwyn, Louis B. Mayer, and Jack Warner, were
26 members of California's rapidly growing Jewish community. Many
27 Jewish performers of the silent and early movie era, such as Fanny
28 Brice, Bronco Billy Anderson, Theda Bara, Al Jolson, and Douglas
29 Fairbanks, also came to Hollywood and helped start the motion
30 picture industry; and

31 WHEREAS, In the 1930s and 1940s and after the Second World
32 War, California welcomed refugees from Nazi persecution, who
33 then contributed to our state's business, cultural, and academic
34 life. These members of the Jewish community were joined by tens
35 of thousands of second generation families moving west to enjoy
36 the prosperity and growth of California in the postwar period and
37 they took advantage of California's advanced public university
38 system, moving rapidly into the middle class and the professions;
39 and

1 WHEREAS, A new wave of Jewish immigrants fleeing
2 persecution and political instability in the former Soviet Union
3 and Iran began to arrive in California in the 1970s and 1980s. After
4 Tehran, Los Angeles is now the city with the second largest ethnic
5 Iranian population in the world, the majority of which is Jewish;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, In the decades after the Second World War, the
8 remaining barriers to Jewish educational, economic, and social
9 advancement fell rapidly as California society led the way in
10 tolerance of diversity and a commitment to an open society. Jewish
11 institutions, such as the Skirbal Cultural Center and the Museum
12 of Tolerance, have become central institutions in California's
13 cultural life; and

14 WHEREAS, California has been home to the Jewish community
15 since the arrival of the earliest European settlers. Successive waves
16 of Jewish immigrants have come to California to find a better life.
17 California's openness has allowed the Jewish community to enjoy
18 a degree of freedom and prosperity unrivaled in history; now,
19 therefore, be it

20 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly*
21 *thereof concurring,* That the Legislature hereby designates May
22 2009 as Jewish American Heritage Month; and be it further

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