

AMENDED IN SENATE MARCH 16, 2009

Senate Concurrent Resolution

No. 19

Introduced by Senator Steinberg

~~(Principal coauthor: Senator Florez~~ **coauthors: Senators Florez,
Pavley, and Lowenthal)**

~~(Principal coauthor: Assembly Member Ruskin~~ **coauthors: Assembly
Members Block, Blumenfield, Gilmore, Jones, Ruskin, and Solorio)**

(Coauthors: Senators Alquist, Runner, and Yee)

~~(Coauthors: Assembly Members Bill Berryhill, Hayashi, Huffman,
Jeffries, Monning, Nestande, Niello, and Torlakson)~~

March 4, 2009

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

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 19, as amended, 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~~ *Southwest* as early as the
3 seventeenth century, fleeing persecution from the Spanish
4 Inquisition. As “conversos,” they had to practice their religion in
5 secret to avoid detection of their true religious faith by the
6 Inquisition, which was active in 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

1 of Nevada City, Grass Valley, Jackson, and Sacramento. Most of
2 the Jewish population were immigrants from Germany and
3 Austria-Hungary; and

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

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

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

35 WHEREAS, In the 1930s and 1940s and after the Second World
36 War, California welcomed refugees from Nazi persecution, who
37 then contributed to our state's business, cultural, and academic
38 life. These members of the Jewish community were joined by tens
39 of thousands of second generation families moving west to enjoy
40 the prosperity and growth of California in the postwar period and

1 they took advantage of California’s advanced public university
2 system, moving rapidly into the middle class and the professions;
3 and

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

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

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

23 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly*
24 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature hereby designates May
25 2009 as Jewish American Heritage Month; and be it further

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

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