

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 19

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 24

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

[Filed with Secretary of State May 14, 2009.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 19, Steinberg. Jewish American Heritage Month.

This bill would designate May 2009 as Jewish American Heritage Month.

WHEREAS, The earliest Jewish immigrants came to California and other parts of the Southwest as early as the seventeenth century, fleeing persecution from the Spanish Inquisition. As “conversos,” they had to practice their religion in secret to avoid detection of their true religious faith by the Inquisition, which was active in Spain’s New World colonies; and

WHEREAS, The next wave of Jewish immigration to California came during the Gold Rush of 1849. Jews were among the original “Forty-Niners,” settling in San Francisco and the Gold Rush towns of Nevada City, Grass Valley, Jackson, and Sacramento. Most of the Jewish population were immigrants from Germany and Austria-Hungary; and

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

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

WHEREAS, Starting in the early twentieth century, a new wave of Jewish immigrants arrived in California, mostly from the countries in eastern Europe and Russia. They were fleeing religious persecution and terrible poverty in their native lands and flocked to the cities of the East Coast. These immigrants soon began making their way to the Golden State, settling in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego, Sacramento, and throughout the San Joaquin Valley. It was in Hollywood that the motion picture industry began to develop and many of its pioneers, such as Carl Laemmle, Adolph Zukor, Samuel Goldwyn, Louis B. Mayer, and Jack Warner, were members

of California's rapidly growing Jewish community. Many Jewish performers of the silent and early movie era, such as Fanny Brice, Bronco Billy Anderson, Theda Bara, Al Jolson, and Douglas Fairbanks, also came to Hollywood and helped start the motion picture industry; and

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

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

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

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

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

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