

## **Senate Joint Resolution No. 6**

### **RESOLUTION CHAPTER 60**

Senate Joint Resolution No. 6—Relative to pedestrian safety.

[Filed with Secretary of State June 30, 2009.]

#### **LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

SJR 6, Lowenthal. Pedestrian safety.

This measure would urge the United States Congress and the President to support efforts to conduct appropriate research and develop minimum noise standards for new motor vehicles.

WHEREAS, Motor vehicles designed to provide the desirable benefits of reducing harmful pollutants and operating with greater fuel efficiency include gasoline-electric hybrid and electric-only vehicles, and in the foreseeable future may include vehicles powered by hydrogen fuel cell and other engine designs that rely on fuels and technologies other than the gasoline-powered internal combustion engine; and

WHEREAS, These vehicle engine designs operate or are likely to operate with virtually no sound being produced by the vehicle; and

WHEREAS, The total number of hybrid motor vehicles sold per year in the United States is growing dramatically, and may someday equal or exceed the number of internal combustion engine motor vehicles on the nation's roads; and

WHEREAS, With its large population and its ongoing leadership in the promotion of fuel efficient motor vehicles, California has a disproportionately high number of alternative fuel vehicles operating on its streets; and

WHEREAS, Blind pedestrians cannot locate and evaluate traffic by sight and instead must listen to traffic to discern its speed, direction, and other attributes in order to travel safely and independently; and

WHEREAS, Other people, including pedestrians who are not blind, bicyclists, runners, and small children, benefit from multisensory information available from vehicle traffic, including the sound of vehicle engines; and

WHEREAS, When operating on their electric engines, hybrid vehicles cannot be heard by blind people and others, rendering those vehicles dangerous when driving on the street, emerging from driveways, moving through parking lots, and in other situations where pedestrians and vehicles come into proximity with each other; and

WHEREAS, Failure to take immediate action to ensure that blind pedestrians can hear hybrid and other silent vehicles in all phases of their operation will inevitably lead to pedestrian injuries and fatalities; and

WHEREAS, These accidents are preventable through vehicle designs which take into account the multisensory nature of traffic detection and avoidance, and require that vehicles emit a minimum level of sound designed to alert all pedestrians, especially blind pedestrians, to the presence of these vehicles; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 1174, which passed in 2008, directed the California Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission (CEC) to convene a Quiet Motorized Vehicle and Safe Mobility Committee to investigate strategies to increase pedestrian safety around electric and other quiet vehicles; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 1174 required the CEC to convene a committee, to be comprised of representatives of vehicle manufacturers, the blind or visually impaired pedestrian community, insurance industry, vehicle research entities, and law enforcement organizations, including, but not limited to, the Department of the California Highway Patrol; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 1174 directed the committee to research, identify, and make recommendations to the CEC on strategies to ensure that all motorized road vehicles, regardless of engine type or configuration, emit sound sufficient to be heard and localized; and

WHEREAS, Senate Bill 1174, also required the CEC to make recommendations based on the research conducted that are to include, but not be limited to, proposed legislation and regulations, needed research or technology, and funding options for implementing recommendations recognizing the need for urgent action in this matter by providing for the funding of collaborative research into methodologies that would enable pedestrians to hear hybrid vehicles; and

WHEREAS, The Governor's veto of Senate Bill 1174 was based not on a failure to recognize the severity of the problem, but rather the belief that federal funding for this research was available; and

WHEREAS, Although recently enacted provisions of federal law require a report to be prepared by June of this year on this problem, funding has not yet been made available to conduct the research necessary to find a uniformly applicable and appropriate solution and to adopt national standards based upon that research; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress is considering the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act, HR 734, which would direct the United States Department of Transportation to conduct the appropriate research and develop minimum noise standards for new motor vehicles; now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of California, jointly,* That the California State Legislature urges the United States Congress and the President to recognize the severity of the problem and support efforts to conduct appropriate research and develop minimum noise standards for new motor vehicles; and be it further

*Resolved,* That the Secretary of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the United

States Senate, and to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States.

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