

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 40

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 14

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 40—Relative to Vietnamese American history.

[Filed with Secretary of State April 27, 2011.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 40, Solorio. Vietnamese American history.

This measure would recognize April 24, 2011, to April 30, 2011, inclusive, as Black April Memorial Week, and April 2011 as Vietnamese American month.

WHEREAS, April 30, 2011, marks the 36th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War and the start of the eventual exodus of several million Vietnamese out of Vietnam after South Vietnam's capital of Saigon fell to the communists on April 30, 1975; and

WHEREAS, For many Vietnam and Vietnam-era veterans who were directly involved in the war and Vietnamese Americans who have settled in the United States, the Vietnam War was a tragedy full of great suffering and the loss of American, Vietnamese, and Southeast Asian lives; and

WHEREAS, 58,169 people were killed and 304,000 were wounded out of the 2.59 million people who served in the Vietnam War so that one out of every ten Americans who served in Vietnam became a casualty of war; and

WHEREAS, During the American evacuation of Saigon, the first wave of Vietnamese refugees, 135,000 strong, mostly military officers and their families, took temporary shelter through several international refugee camps, and at Camp Pendleton in San Diego, Fort Chaffee in Arkansas, and Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania; and

WHEREAS, Starting in 1977, and lasting through the mid-1980s, a second wave of Vietnamese refugees comprised mostly of "boat people" began leaving Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, Seeing no future under communism, nearly 800,000 boat people risked their lives in small, dangerous boats to travel to resettlement camps in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines before eventually being resettled in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Red Cross estimated that during that time, at least 300,000 Vietnamese died on the high seas while trying to escape communism; and

WHEREAS, After 1985, a third wave of Vietnamese refugees came to the United States under the Orderly Department Program; and

WHEREAS, In 1988, Congress passed the Operation Homecoming Act, a program allowing approximately 80,000 Amerasian children (offspring of GI fathers and Vietnamese mothers) to come to America; and

WHEREAS, By 1990, the fourth wave of Vietnamese refugees began arriving in the United States under the Humanitarian Operation, and today, more than 1.7 million Vietnamese immigrants reside in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Studies using census data show that foreign-born Vietnamese entering the United States in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000 to 2005, inclusive, have seen an increase in terms of English proficiency, proportion of college graduates, the number of owner-occupied housing, family median income, and naturalization; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, Vietnamese immigrants have overcome social, economic, and language barriers of unforeseen magnitude to grow and become the most assimilated along civic dimensions of any large group in America; and

WHEREAS, Through emphasis on intense study, Vietnamese Americans have reached the pinnacles of American success in a variety of fields, including business and entrepreneurship, science and technology, space travel, medicine, the executive branch of the United States government, politics, the United States military, the United States judicial system, professional sports, and most recently, cultural icon status in cooking, modeling, acting, and comedy; and

WHEREAS, In order to serve their community and prosper in America, Vietnamese Americans formed well-established and thriving Vietnamese American commercial districts throughout the United States and California, including enclaves in Oakland, Orange County, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco, and San Jose; and

WHEREAS, More than 450,000 Vietnamese now live in California, with the largest concentration of Vietnamese found outside of Vietnam residing in Orange County, particularly in the cities of Garden Grove, Santa Ana, Westminster, and Fountain Valley; and

WHEREAS, San Jose, with a population of 900,000, has the largest concentration of Vietnamese of any American city, estimated at 10 percent of the city's population; and

WHEREAS, In 2006, the U.S. Census Bureau survey of business owners reported that there are 50,321 Vietnamese businesses in California; and

WHEREAS, As we must teach our children and future generations important lessons from the Vietnam War, including how the plight of the Vietnamese refugees following the end of war serves as a powerful example of the values of freedom and democracy; and

WHEREAS, Refugees and immigrants from the former Republic of Vietnam who came to the United States and settled as free Vietnamese Americans are honored and remembered for their sacrifices for freedom and human rights and for their ongoing contributions to our democratic society; and

WHEREAS, An executive order issued by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger honors the contributions of the Vietnamese American community to the State of California and recognizes their love for democracy, justice, and tolerance, upon which the symbol of the Vietnamese Heritage and Freedom flag was established; and

WHEREAS, The Vietnamese Heritage and Freedom flag, yellow, with three horizontal red stripes, is the only symbol that can unite most Vietnamese around the world and bring them together under the banner that symbolizes the aspiration for freedom and democracy in their homeland; and

WHEREAS, Although also united in sorrow as they commemorate April 30, 2011, as Black April, an occasion to reflect on the sacrifices of the past, Vietnamese American communities throughout California consider Black April a celebration of the resilience of the Vietnamese people; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That in recognition of the great tragedy and suffering and lives lost during the Vietnam War era, the week of April 24, 2011, to April 30, 2011, inclusive, shall be proclaimed Black April Memorial Week, a special time for Californians to remember the countless lives lost during the Vietnam War era, and to hope for a more humane and just life for the people of Vietnam; and be it further

Resolved, That, to honor a community that has added so much personal, cultural, and economic value to the social fabric of the great State of California, which embraces ethnic and cultural diversity, the month of April 2011 be recognized as Vietnamese American Month.