

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 31

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 9

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 31—Relative to the 144th Fighter Wing.

[Filed with Secretary of State March 29, 2012.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 31, Perea. 144th Fighter Wing.

This measure would respectfully request Congress and the Department of Defense to remain committed to maintaining the 144th Fighter Wing and the Aerospace Control Alert mission in California in order to prevent any negative impacts to Southwest air defense operations, the California economy, and the ability of first responders to protect the residents of this state.

WHEREAS, The California Air National Guard 144th Fighter Wing located in Fresno is composed of 1,046 airmen, 22 F-16 aircraft, and one RC-26 Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance aircraft; and

WHEREAS, The primary mission of the 144th is to provide air superiority worldwide in support of joint operations and Aerospace Control Alert for the Southwest United States. This mission requires the maintenance of a number of aircraft ready for immediate launch to intercept air threats to the United States. The California Air National Guard has the second busiest Aerospace Control Alert mission in the United States behind the National Capitol Region. Aircraft on alert are positioned at Fresno and March Air Reserve Base at Riverside; and

WHEREAS, As part of the enacted fiscal year 2012 Federal Budget, the 144th will begin to convert from F-16 aircraft to F-15 aircraft in August 2012. Aircraft conversion at the 144th Wing involves replacing the F-16 aircraft with the F-15 aircraft in order to provide a better platform to conduct the air superiority and air defense missions. More than one-half of the support equipment required for the F-15 conversion is on location, and maintenance training began in May 2011. The first of 21 assigned F-15 aircraft is scheduled to arrive at Fresno on August 15, 2012. The Fighter Wing will have 18 F-15 aircraft by January 31, 2013, with the balance scheduled to arrive by May 2013; and

WHEREAS, There is consideration within the Department of Defense to eliminate the 144th Fighter Wing and backfill its air defense mission using aircraft, personnel, and equipment from other states; and

WHEREAS, The initiative to divest the 144th Fighter Wing would eliminate an air defense base consisting of 22 jets and replace it with two out-of-state detachments consisting of six jets, significantly increasing response time to increased threats; and

WHEREAS, California would lose valuable civilian support capabilities and personnel trained and ready for a variety of domestic emergencies. Law enforcement, fire, and other agencies frequently rely on the 144th Fighter Wing's ground capabilities, which include civil engineering, explosive ordnance disposal, communications, aerial imaging, maintenance, logistics, and medical support; and

WHEREAS, There would be significant operational costs to the federal government associated with conducting an air defense alert site for the Southwest United States from outside California. This would include logistical costs to rotate personnel to their assignments, as well as additional flying hours that would be required to ferry out-of-state aircraft to the alert site after routine maintenance. Additional costs would be incurred for maintaining aircraft away from its home station, including the shipment of equipment and supplies; and

WHEREAS, The closure of the 144th Fighter Wing would have a devastating impact on the economies of Fresno and Riverside, which already suffer from unemployment rates that are well above the national rate. The 144th Fighter Wing employs 1,046 airmen and women who have 1,642 dependents. The Air Force spends over \$70 million dollars per year on the 144th Fighter Wing; and

WHEREAS, The proposal to divest the 144th Fighter Wing is costly, places the Southwest air defense mission at risk, and eliminates the ground capabilities available to support first responders throughout the state and FEMA Region IX; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature respectfully requests Congress and the Department of Defense to remain committed to maintaining the 144th Fighter Wing and the Aerospace Control Alert mission in California in order to prevent any negative impacts to Southwest air defense operations, the California economy, and the ability of first responders to protect the residents of this state; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the Secretary of Defense and to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States, and to the author for appropriate distribution.