

House Resolution

No. 17

Introduced by Assembly Member Allen

June 8, 2011

House Resolution No. 17—Relative to Eritrea.

1 WHEREAS, In 1890 Eritrea became an Italian colony; and

2 WHEREAS, Italian colonization of the region was ended when
3 the British forced the Italians out and reinstated Haile Selassie in
4 Ethiopia during World War II; and

5 WHEREAS, In 1952, despite Eritrean opposition, a United
6 Nations resolution federating Eritrea with Ethiopia went into effect.
7 The resolution ignored Eritrean pleas for independence but
8 guaranteed Eritreans some democratic rights and a measure of
9 autonomy. Almost immediately after the federation went into
10 effect, however, these rights began to be abridged or violated; and

11 WHEREAS, In 1962, Emperor Haile Sellassie unilaterally
12 dissolved the Eritrean parliament and annexed the country, sparking
13 the Eritrean fight for independence from Ethiopia that continued
14 after Haile Sellassie was ousted in a coup in 1974; and

15 WHEREAS, The new Ethiopian government, called the Derg,
16 was a Marxist military junta led by Ethiopian strongman Mengistu
17 Haile Miriam; and

18 WHEREAS, During the 1960s, the Eritrean Liberation Front
19 led the Eritrean independence struggle; and

20 WHEREAS, In 1970, some members of the group broke away
21 to form the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF); and

22 WHEREAS, By the late 1970s, the EPLF had become the
23 dominant armed Eritrean group fighting against the Ethiopian
24 government, with Isaias Afwerki as its leader; and

1 WHEREAS, The EPLF used material captured from the
2 Ethiopian army to fight against the government; and

3 WHEREAS, On May 24, 1991, after 30 years of armed struggle,
4 the Eritrean forces finally defeated the army of Ethiopian military
5 dictator Mariam and EPLF leader Afewerki immediately declared
6 Eritrea a sovereign state; and

7 WHEREAS, In April 1993, after two years of de facto
8 independence under the leadership of Afewerki, Eritrea held a
9 United Nations-sponsored referendum on independence that was
10 approved by 99.8 percent of Eritrean voters; and

11 WHEREAS, Independence was officially declared on May 24,
12 1993; and

13 WHEREAS, The strong sense of national identity forged during
14 30 years of secessionist civil war proved invaluable in establishing
15 a stable atmosphere for the country's first years of sovereignty and
16 helping the nation persevere through two years of bloody border
17 conflict with Ethiopia; and

18 WHEREAS, Cultural development was an integral part of the
19 liberation struggle and has remained so since Eritrea's
20 independence, both as an expression of national identity and as a
21 crucial foundation upon which the nation itself is built; and

22 WHEREAS, During the armed struggle for liberation, Eritrean
23 cultural values played an important role in strengthening the
24 commitment towards national unity and freedom. Today, those
25 same values highlight the country's sovereignty, as they determine
26 the country's aspirations for peace and prosperity for all its citizens;
27 now, therefore, be it

28 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California*, That the
29 Assembly of the State of California recognizes the profound
30 significance of the history of Eritrea, and its future aspirations, on
31 the country's 18th year of independence; and be it further

32 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
33 of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.