

**Assembly Concurrent Resolution**

**No. 162**

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**Introduced by Assembly Member Medina**

June 17, 2014

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 162—Relative to the CDF Firefighter John D. Guthrie Memorial Highway.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

ACR 162, as introduced, Medina. CDF Firefighter John D. Guthrie Memorial Highway.

This measure would designate a specified portion of State Highway Route 215 as the “CDF Firefighter John D. Guthrie Memorial Highway.”

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1     WHEREAS, As a young man growing up in Perris, California,  
2     John Guthrie often volunteered to help the older men fight fires  
3     in the rural community and always wanted to be a firefighter; and  
4     WHEREAS, After two years of service in the Navy, Guthrie  
5     returned home and signed on with the United States Forest Service  
6     as a firefighter, and, in 1954, was stationed at the El Cariso fire  
7     station; and  
8     WHEREAS, In 1955, Guthrie was hired by the California  
9     Division of Forestry and began working at the Lake Elsinore  
10    Station; and  
11    WHEREAS, On August 8, 1959, two teenagers driving down  
12    the curvy highway toward Lake Elsinore lost control of their truck  
13    and it flew off of the roadway and down a 200-foot embankment,  
14    sparking an inferno that became known as the Decker Canyon  
15    Fire; and

1 WHEREAS, More than 500 California Division of Forestry,  
2 United States Forest Service, local, and volunteer firefighters were  
3 called to fight the Decker Canyon Fire, which swept out of the  
4 hills and forced the evacuation of Lakeland Village; and

5 WHEREAS, Guthrie was a firetruck driver working at the fire  
6 station on Old Town Temecula, and when the call went out Guthrie  
7 and his crew headed north toward the billowing smoke; and

8 WHEREAS, Guthrie and his crew were sent off of the main  
9 road about a mile east of El Cariso Village into a canyon to start  
10 setting backfires and the shifting winds soon pushed a wall of  
11 flame back up the canyon toward their truck; and

12 WHEREAS, With the flames advancing on them, Guthrie  
13 ordered the other firefighters back to the truck for protection, thus  
14 saving their lives, despite the fact that there was not room in the  
15 truck for him; and

16 WHEREAS, Guthrie attempted to use a firehose to wet himself  
17 down for protection, but the firehose was burned beyond use; and

18 WHEREAS, Twenty-seven other firefighters were injured  
19 fighting the 1,700-acre blaze, some losing ears, fingers, and noses;  
20 and

21 WHEREAS, Guthrie, with over 85 percent of his body burned,  
22 began walking out of the canyon before others came to his aid and  
23 an ambulance arrived to take him to the closest hospital, which  
24 was located in Hemet; and

25 WHEREAS, Guthrie finally succumbed to his injuries at  
26 Redland's hospital on September 14, 1959; and

27 WHEREAS, Guthrie left behind his wife Carlo and a young son  
28 and daughter; and

29 WHEREAS, It is vital that the sacrifice by John Guthrie and the  
30 other firefighters who were killed in the Decker Canyon Fire in  
31 order to protect the citizens of California be remembered; now,  
32 therefore, be it

33 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*  
34 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature hereby dedicates that  
35 portion of State Highway Route 215 between the Ramona  
36 Expressway Exit, at postmile 31.08, and its junction with State  
37 Route 74, at postmile 26.31, in honor of John D. Guthrie by  
38 officially designating that route as the CDF Firefighter John D.  
39 Guthrie Memorial Highway; and be it further

- 1     *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
- 2     of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

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