

**Introduced by Senators De León and Yee
(Coauthor: Senator Lara)**

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Achadjian, Gatto, Nazarian, and Wilk)

March 24, 2014

Senate Joint Resolution No. 21—Relative to the Armenian Genocide.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

SJR 21, as introduced, De León. Armenian Genocide.

This measure would designate and encourage the people of California to commemorate the month of April 2014, as “California Month of Remembrance for the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923,” and would call upon the Congress and the President of the United States to act likewise and to formally and consistently recognize and reaffirm the historical truth that the atrocities committed against the Armenian people constituted genocide. The measure would commend conscientious educators who teach about human rights and genocide. The measure would call upon the President to work toward equitable, constructive, stable, and durable Armenian-Turkish relations and a fair, just, and comprehensive international resolution of this crime against humanity, and would call upon the Republic of Turkey to acknowledge the facts of the Armenian Genocide and to work toward a just resolution.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, During the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923 1.5
- 2 million men, women, and children of Armenian descent lost their
- 3 lives at the hands of the Ottoman Turkish Empire in its attempt to
- 4 systematically eliminate the Armenian race; and
- 5 WHEREAS, Despite Armenians’ historic presence, stewardship,
- 6 and autonomy in the region, Turkish rulers of the Ottoman Empire

1 subjected Armenians to severe and unjust persecution and brutality
2 including, but not limited to, widespread and wholesale massacres
3 beginning in the 1890's, most notably the Hamidian Massacres
4 from 1894 to 1896 and the Adana Massacre of 1909; and

5 WHEREAS, The earlier massacres and subsequent genocide of
6 the Armenians constitute one of the most atrocious violations of
7 human rights in the history of the world; and

8 WHEREAS, Adolph Hitler, in persuading his army commanders
9 that the merciless persecution and killing of Jews, Poles, and other
10 people would bring no retribution, declared, "Who, after all, speaks
11 today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"; and

12 WHEREAS, Unlike other people and governments that have
13 admitted and denounced the abuses and crimes of predecessor
14 regimes, and despite the overwhelming proof of genocidal intent,
15 the Republic of Turkey has inexplicably and adamantly denied the
16 occurrence of the crimes against humanity committed by the
17 Ottoman and Young Turk rulers. Those denials compound the
18 grief of the few remaining survivors of the atrocities, desecrate
19 the memory of the victims, and cause continuing pain to the
20 descendants of the victims; and

21 WHEREAS, The Republic of Turkey has escalated its
22 international campaign of Armenian Genocide denial, maintained
23 its blockade of Armenia and increased its pressure on the small
24 but growing movement in Turkey acknowledging the Armenian
25 Genocide and seeking justice for this systematic campaign of
26 destruction of millions of Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, Pontians,
27 Syriacs, and other Christians upon their biblical-era homelands;
28 and

29 WHEREAS, Those citizens of Turkey, both Armenian and
30 non-Armenian, who continue to speak the truth about the Armenian
31 Genocide, such as human rights activist and journalist Hrant Dink,
32 continue to be silenced by violent means; and

33 WHEREAS, The accelerated level and scope of denial and
34 revisionism, coupled with the passage of time and the fact that
35 very few survivors remain who can serve as reminders of the
36 indescribable brutality and the lives that were tormented, compel
37 a sense of urgency in efforts to solidify recognition of historical
38 truth; and

39 WHEREAS, The United States is on record as having officially
40 recognized the Armenian Genocide in the United States

1 government’s May 28, 1951, written statement to the International
2 Court of Justice regarding the Reservations to the Convention on
3 the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, through
4 President Ronald Reagan’s April 22, 1981, Proclamation No. 4838,
5 and by Congressional legislation including House Joint Resolution
6 148 adopted on April 8, 1975, and House Joint Resolution 247
7 adopted on September 10, 1984; and

8 WHEREAS, Even prior to the Convention on the Prevention
9 and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the United States has
10 a record of having sought to justly and constructively address the
11 consequences of the Ottoman Empire’s intentional destruction of
12 the Armenian people, including through Senate Concurrent
13 Resolution 12 adopted on February 9, 1916, Senate Resolution
14 359 adopted on May 11, 1920, and President Woodrow Wilson’s
15 November 22, 1920, decision entitled, The Frontier between
16 Armenia and Turkey; and

17 WHEREAS, By consistently remembering and forcefully
18 condemning the atrocities committed against the Armenians, and
19 honoring the survivors as well as other victims of similar heinous
20 conduct, we guard against repetition of such acts of genocide and
21 provide the American public with a greater understanding of
22 history; and

23 WHEREAS, This measure would declare that the Legislature
24 deplores the persistent, ongoing efforts by any person, in this
25 country or abroad, to deny the historical fact of the Armenian
26 Genocide; and

27 WHEREAS, California is home to the largest
28 Armenian-American population in the United States, and
29 Armenians living in California have enriched our state through
30 their leadership and contribution in business, agriculture, academia,
31 government, and the arts; and

32 WHEREAS, The State of California has been at the forefront
33 of encouraging and promoting a curriculum relating to human
34 rights and genocide in order to empower future generations to
35 prevent the recurrence of genocide; and

36 WHEREAS, On April 24, 2013, the President of the United
37 States stated, “A full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the facts
38 is in all of our interests. Nations grow stronger by acknowledging
39 and reckoning with painful elements of the past, thereby building
40 a foundation for a more just and tolerant future”; and

1 WHEREAS, President Obama entered office having stated his
2 “firmly held conviction that the Armenian Genocide is not an
3 allegation, a personal opinion, or a point of view, but rather a
4 widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming body of
5 historical evidence” and affirmed his record of “calling for
6 Turkey’s acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide”; and

7 WHEREAS, The United States’ national interests in establishing
8 equitable, constructive, stable, and durable relations between
9 Armenians and Turks cannot be meaningfully advanced by
10 circumventing or otherwise seeking to avoid the central political,
11 legal, security, and moral issue between these two nations:
12 Turkey’s denial of truth and justice for the Armenian Genocide;
13 now, therefore, be it

14 *Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of*
15 *California, jointly*, That the Legislature hereby designates the
16 month of April 2014, as “California Month of Remembrance for
17 the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923”; and be it further

18 *Resolved*, That the Legislature commends its conscientious
19 educators who teach about human rights and genocide; and be it
20 further

21 *Resolved*, That the Legislature respectfully calls upon the
22 Congress and the President of the United States to act likewise
23 and to formally and consistently recognize and reaffirm the
24 historical truth that the atrocities committed against the Armenian
25 people constituted genocide; and be it further

26 *Resolved*, That the Legislature calls on the President to work
27 toward equitable, constructive, stable, and durable
28 Armenian-Turkish relations based upon the Republic of Turkey’s
29 full acknowledgment of the facts and ongoing consequences of
30 the Armenian Genocide, and a fair, just, and comprehensive
31 international resolution of this crime against humanity; and be it
32 further

33 *Resolved*, That the Legislature calls upon the Republic of Turkey
34 to acknowledge the facts of the Armenian Genocide and to work
35 toward a just resolution; and be it further

36 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
37 this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United
38 States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the
39 Majority leader of the Senate, to each Senator and Representative

- 1 from California in the Congress of the United States, the Governor,
- 2 and the Turkish Ambassador to the United States.

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