

Assembly Joint Resolution

No. 2

Introduced by Assembly Members Nazarian, Achadjian, and Wilk

December 1, 2014

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 2—Relative to the Armenian Genocide.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

AJR 2, as introduced, Nazarian. Armenian Genocide.

This measure would, among other things, designate the month of April 2015, as “California Month of Remembrance for the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923,” and would call upon the President and Congress of the United States to formally and consistently recognize and reaffirm the historical truth that the atrocities committed against the Armenian people constituted genocide, 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
- 7 subjected Armenians to severe and unjust persecution and brutality,
- 8 including, but not limited to, widespread and wholesale massacres
- 9 beginning in the 1890s, most notably the Hamidian Massacres
- 10 from 1894 to 1896 and the Adana Massacre of 1909; and

1 WHEREAS, The earlier massacres and subsequent genocide of
2 the Armenians constitute one of the most atrocious violations of
3 human rights in the history of the world; and

4 WHEREAS, Adolph Hitler, in persuading his army commanders
5 that the merciless persecution and killing of Jews, Poles, and other
6 people would bring no retribution, declared, “Who, after all, speaks
7 today of the annihilation of the Armenians?”; and

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

17 WHEREAS, Leaders of nations with strategic, commercial, and
18 cultural ties to the Republic of Turkey should be reminded of their
19 duty to encourage Turkish officials to cease efforts to distort facts
20 and deny the history of events surrounding the Armenian Genocide;
21 and

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

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

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

1 WHEREAS, The United States is on record as having officially
2 recognized the Armenian Genocide in the United States
3 government’s May 28, 1951, written statement to the International
4 Court of Justice regarding the Reservations to the Convention on
5 the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, through
6 President Ronald Reagan’s April 22, 1981, Proclamation No. 4838,
7 and by Congressional legislation including United States House
8 of Representatives Joint Resolution 148 adopted on April 9, 1975,
9 and United States House of Representatives Joint Resolution 247
10 adopted on September 12 , 1984; and

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

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

26 WHEREAS, There is continued concern about the welfare of
27 Christians in the Republic of Turkey, their right to worship and
28 practice their faith freely, and the legal status and condition of
29 churches and other places of worship, monasteries, schools,
30 hospitals, monuments, relics, holy sites, and other religious
31 properties in the Republic of Turkey; and

32 WHEREAS, California is home to the largest
33 Armenian-American population in the United States, and
34 Armenians living in California have enriched our state through
35 their leadership and contribution in business, agriculture, academia,
36 government, and the arts; and

37 WHEREAS, The State of California has been at the forefront
38 of encouraging and promoting a curriculum relating to human
39 rights and genocide in order to empower future generations to
40 prevent the recurrence of genocide; and

1 WHEREAS, On April 24, 2014, President Obama stated, “A
2 full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the facts is in all of our
3 interests. Peoples and nations grow stronger, and build a foundation
4 for a more just and tolerant future, by acknowledging and
5 reckoning with painful elements of the past”; and

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

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

19 WHEREAS, The 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide
20 signifies a global demand for justice by Armenians worldwide and
21 all people of good will and this centennial marks one of the 20th
22 century’s greatest crimes against humanity, when in 1915, the
23 Turkish Government began a premeditated and systematic
24 campaign to uproot the Armenian population from its ancestral
25 homeland and slaughter 1.5 million defenseless men, women, and
26 children; now, therefore, be it

27 *Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of*
28 *California, jointly*, That the Legislature hereby designates the
29 month of April 2015, as “California Month of Remembrance for
30 the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923”; and be it further

31 *Resolved*, That the Legislature commends its conscientious
32 educators who teach about human rights and genocide; and be it
33 further

34 *Resolved*, That the Legislature respectfully calls upon the
35 President and Congress of the United States to act likewise and to
36 formally and consistently recognize and reaffirm the historical
37 truth that the atrocities committed against the Armenian people
38 constituted genocide; and be it further

39 *Resolved*, That the Legislature calls on the President of the
40 United States to work toward equitable, constructive, stable, and

1 durable Armenian-Turkish relations based upon the Republic of
2 Turkey's full acknowledgment of the facts and ongoing
3 consequences of the Armenian Genocide, and a fair, just, and
4 comprehensive international resolution of this crime against
5 humanity; and be it further

6 *Resolved*, That the Legislature declares that it deplors the
7 persistent, ongoing efforts by any person, in this country or abroad,
8 to deny the historical fact of the Armenian Genocide; and be it
9 further

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

13 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
14 of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United
15 States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the
16 Majority Leader of the Senate, to each Senator and Representative
17 from California in the Congress of the United States, the Governor,
18 and the Turkish Ambassador to the United States.

O