Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 71

Introduced by Assembly Member Dodd
(Coauthor: Assembly Member Bloom)

May 14, 2015

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 71—Relative to Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Awareness Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

ACR 71, as introduced, Dodd. Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Awareness Month.

This measure would proclaim and acknowledge the month of June 2015 and every year thereafter as Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Awareness Month.

Fiscal committee: no.

WHEREAS, Elder and vulnerable adult abuse is a serious and growing crisis in California; and

WHEREAS, Not a day goes by without reports of horrific cases of abuse or exploitation of elder or vulnerable adults; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the United States, 10,000 people a day are turning 65 years of age; and

WHEREAS, One in ten Americans 60 years of age and older experience abuse each year; and

WHEREAS, One in every eight individuals over 65 years of age is living with Alzheimer’s disease and nearly one in two people with dementia experiences some form of abuse by others; and

WHEREAS, Elder and vulnerable adults may be impacted by any of a constellation of physical, mental, pharmaceutical, or
medical influences, any one of which could render them unable
to protect themselves or self-advocate, to report to authorities when
abuse occurs, or to testify against perpetrators; and
WHEREAS, A 2009 National Institute of Justice study found
that 11 percent of elders reported experiencing at least one form
of mistreatment, including emotional, physical, sexual, or neglect,
in the past year; and
WHEREAS, Elder and vulnerable adult abuse may be physical,
emotional, sexual, or fiduciary and consists of crimes that recognize
no boundaries of economic, educational, or social status, gender,
race, culture, religion, or geographic location; and
WHEREAS, Subtle indicators that abuse may be occurring
include bruises or pressure marks, unexplained withdrawal from
normal activities, a change in alertness, unusual depression, sudden
changes in financial situations, strained or tense relationships, or
frequent arguments; and
WHEREAS, Recognizing these signs is the first step toward the
prevention of elder and vulnerable adult abuse; and
WHEREAS, Elders who experience abuse or mistreatment face
a greater risk of impacting the health system or impacting the social
service system; and
WHEREAS, The growing rate of elder abuse and vulnerable
adult abuse exacts a heavy toll on public resources as elder financial
abuse victims often become nursing home residents that are
dependent upon Medi-Cal; and
WHEREAS, Elder and dependent adult victims have a mortality
rate three times that of the general public and are 300 percent more
likely to die a premature death; and
WHEREAS, The incidence of abuse and exploitation of the
developmentally disabled population is shocking. Over 80 percent
of women with developmental disabilities and over 30 percent of
men with developmental disabilities are sexually abused at least
once during their lifetime; and
WHEREAS, Given that one in every 110 babies born today has
a disorder on the autism spectrum, the rapid growth of special
populations in need of enhanced protection will further challenge
an overwhelmed patchwork of programs and services intended to
protect vulnerable adult populations; and
WHEREAS, Current estimates suggest that as few as one in 14
cases of elder and vulnerable adult abuse is reported, including
fewer than one in 25 incidents of financial abuse, because the
victims are ashamed, hopeless, intimidated, or afraid of the
perpetrator; and
WHEREAS, A comprehensive central data repository of all
child abuse investigations has been in existence since 1965, but
no similar repository exists for investigations of crimes against
vulnerable, elderly, and other dependent adults; and
WHEREAS, Even in 2015, with a rapidly expanding population
of elderly adults and other adults with disabilities that render them
vulnerable to predators, the State of California does not collect or
maintain comprehensive data on abuse cases, reports, or
investigations, thus inhibiting the government’s capacity to be
informed about existing trends, and to make informed decisions
about the strategic use of existing resources, let alone improve the
existing reporting system, enhancing protections, or lending law
enforcement partners the tools necessary to secure justice; and
WHEREAS, The lack of statewide elder and vulnerable adult
abuse data prevents policymakers from measuring the extent of
these crimes and tragedies; and
WHEREAS, The lack of a statewide strategy that includes a
single point of contact to report an incident of abuse contributes
to the current state of underreporting, incomplete investigations,
lack of resources, ambiguous jurisdiction, and incomplete data;
and
WHEREAS, The California Commission on Aging and the
California Elder Justice Coalition convened an elder justice summit
in 2013 during which 140 experts and advocates identified
shortcomings in California’s response to elder abuse and proposed
promising solutions, including an Elder Justice Blue Ribbon Panel
to focus on the problem; and
WHEREAS, Elders and vulnerable adults have the right to live
safely in the least restrictive environment, whether in their homes
or health care facilities, and to enjoy an optimum quality of life
while being protected from all forms of injustice; and
WHEREAS, Private citizens and public agencies must work to
combat crime and violence against elders and vulnerable adults,
particularly in the face of continued funding reductions in vital
services; and
WHEREAS, Due to the ubiquitous nature of elder abuse, June
15 is recognized internationally as World Elder Abuse Awareness
Day, first established in 2006, to raise awareness of elder and vulnerable adult abuse and to promote better understanding of the cultural, social, economic and demographic issues behind the growing incidence of elder and vulnerable adult abuse around the globe; and

WHEREAS, All Californians are strongly encouraged to report suspected abuse of an elder or vulnerable adult by calling their local adult protective services agency, Long-Term Care Ombudsman, law enforcement, or emergency services agencies; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature proclaims and acknowledges the month of June 2015 and every year thereafter as Elder and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Awareness Month; and be it further

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