

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.

- 1 WHEREAS, Elder and vulnerable adult abuse is a serious and
2 growing crisis in California; and
3 WHEREAS, Not a day goes by without reports of horrific cases
4 of abuse or exploitation of elder or vulnerable adults; and
5 WHEREAS, Throughout the United States, 10,000 people a day
6 are turning 65 years of age; and
7 WHEREAS, One in ten Americans 60 years of age and older
8 experience abuse each year; and
9 WHEREAS, One in every eight individuals over 65 years of
10 age is living with Alzheimer's disease and nearly one in two people
11 with dementia experiences some form of abuse by others; and
12 WHEREAS, Elder and vulnerable adults may be impacted by
13 any of a constellation of physical, mental, pharmaceutical, or

1 medical influences, any one of which could render them unable
2 to protect themselves or self-advocate, to report to authorities when
3 abuse occurs, or to testify against perpetrators; and

4 WHEREAS, A 2009 National Institute of Justice study found
5 that 11 percent of elders reported experiencing at least one form
6 of mistreatment, including emotional, physical, sexual, or neglect,
7 in the past year; and

8 WHEREAS, Elder and vulnerable adult abuse may be physical,
9 emotional, sexual, or fiduciary and consists of crimes that recognize
10 no boundaries of economic, educational, or social status, gender,
11 race, culture, religion, or geographic location; and

12 WHEREAS, Subtle indicators that abuse may be occurring
13 include bruises or pressure marks, unexplained withdrawal from
14 normal activities, a change in alertness, unusual depression, sudden
15 changes in financial situations, strained or tense relationships, or
16 frequent arguments; and

17 WHEREAS, Recognizing these signs is the first step toward the
18 prevention of elder and vulnerable adult abuse; and

19 WHEREAS, Elders who experience abuse or mistreatment face
20 a greater risk of impacting the health system or impacting the social
21 service system; and

22 WHEREAS, The growing rate of elder abuse and vulnerable
23 adult abuse exacts a heavy toll on public resources as elder financial
24 abuse victims often become nursing home residents that are
25 dependent upon Medi-Cal; and

26 WHEREAS, Elder and dependent adult victims have a mortality
27 rate three times that of the general public and are 300 percent more
28 likely to die a premature death; and

29 WHEREAS, The incidence of abuse and exploitation of the
30 developmentally disabled population is shocking. Over 80 percent
31 of women with developmental disabilities and over 30 percent of
32 men with developmental disabilities are sexually abused at least
33 once during their lifetime; and

34 WHEREAS, Given that one in every 110 babies born today has
35 a disorder on the autism spectrum, the rapid growth of special
36 populations in need of enhanced protection will further challenge
37 an overwhelmed patchwork of programs and services intended to
38 protect vulnerable adult populations; and

39 WHEREAS, Current estimates suggest that as few as one in 14
40 cases of elder and vulnerable adult abuse is reported, including

1 fewer than one in 25 incidents of financial abuse, because the
2 victims are ashamed, hopeless, intimidated, or afraid of the
3 perpetrator; and

4 WHEREAS, A comprehensive central data repository of all
5 child abuse investigations has been in existence since 1965, but
6 no similar repository exists for investigations of crimes against
7 vulnerable, elderly, and other dependent adults; and

8 WHEREAS, Even in 2015, with a rapidly expanding population
9 of elderly adults and other adults with disabilities that render them
10 vulnerable to predators, the State of California does not collect or
11 maintain comprehensive data on abuse cases, reports, or
12 investigations, thus inhibiting the government's capacity to be
13 informed about existing trends, and to make informed decisions
14 about the strategic use of existing resources, let alone improve the
15 existing reporting system, enhancing protections, or lending law
16 enforcement partners the tools necessary to secure justice; and

17 WHEREAS, The lack of statewide elder and vulnerable adult
18 abuse data prevents policymakers from measuring the extent of
19 these crimes and tragedies; and

20 WHEREAS, The lack of a statewide strategy that includes a
21 single point of contact to report an incident of abuse contributes
22 to the current state of underreporting, incomplete investigations,
23 lack of resources, ambiguous jurisdiction, and incomplete data;
24 and

25 WHEREAS, The California Commission on Aging and the
26 California Elder Justice Coalition convened an elder justice summit
27 in 2013 during which 140 experts and advocates identified
28 shortcomings in California's response to elder abuse and proposed
29 promising solutions, including an Elder Justice Blue Ribbon Panel
30 to focus on the problem; and

31 WHEREAS, Elders and vulnerable adults have the right to live
32 safely in the least restrictive environment, whether in their homes
33 or health care facilities, and to enjoy an optimum quality of life
34 while being protected from all forms of injustice; and

35 WHEREAS, Private citizens and public agencies must work to
36 combat crime and violence against elders and vulnerable adults,
37 particularly in the face of continued funding reductions in vital
38 services; and

39 WHEREAS, Due to the ubiquitous nature of elder abuse, June
40 15 is recognized internationally as World Elder Abuse Awareness

1 Day, first established in 2006, to raise awareness of elder and
2 vulnerable adult abuse and to promote better understanding of the
3 cultural, social, economic and demographic issues behind the
4 growing incidence of elder and vulnerable adult abuse around the
5 globe; and

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

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

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