

**Assembly Concurrent Resolution**

**No. 157**

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**Introduced by Assembly Member Hadley**  
**(Coauthor: Assembly Member Gipson)**  
(Coauthor: Senator Allen)

March 29, 2016

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 157—Relative to the Louis Zamperini Memorial Highway.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

ACR 157, as introduced, Hadley. Louis Zamperini Memorial Highway.

This measure would designate a specified portion of Interstate 405 in the County of Los Angeles as the Louis Zamperini Memorial Highway. The measure would also request the Department of Transportation to determine the cost of appropriate signs showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources covering the cost, to erect those signs.

Fiscal committee: yes.

1 WHEREAS, Louis Silvie Zamperini was born on January 26,  
2 1917, in Olean, New York, to Italian immigrants Anthony  
3 Zamperini and Louise Dossi. Zamperini’s family moved to  
4 Torrance, California, in 1919, where Louis began his extraordinary  
5 life; and

6 WHEREAS, Louis Zamperini learned to box before he became  
7 a runner. His father taught him how to box so he could defend  
8 himself against bullies who taunted him because he could not speak

1 English. Pete Zamperini, his older brother, encouraged him to try  
2 out for the track team at Torrance High School; and

3 WHEREAS, Louis Zamperini set the national high school record  
4 in the mile at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in 1934, earning  
5 him the nickname of the “Torrance Tornado.” His record time of  
6 4 minutes, 21.2 seconds stood for 20 years. His schoolboy exploits  
7 on the track team earned him a scholarship to the University of  
8 Southern California; and

9 WHEREAS, Two years later, in the 5,000-meter Olympic trials  
10 at Randalls Island in New York, Louis Zamperini finished in a  
11 dead heat with Don Lash, the world-record holder, which qualified  
12 him for the 1936 Olympics in Berlin as a teenager, alongside such  
13 Olympians as Jesse Owens, Ralph Metcalfe, and Mack Robinson,  
14 the older brother of Jackie Robinson; and

15 WHEREAS, Two years later, in 1938, Louis Zamperini set a  
16 national collegiate mile record of 4:08.3, which stood for 15 years.  
17 He subsequently graduated from the University of Southern  
18 California, and not long after that, when World War II broke out,  
19 he enlisted in September 1941 in the United States Army Air Corps  
20 and became a bombardier on a Consolidated B-24 bomber in the  
21 Pacific theater of operations; and

22 WHEREAS, During a search and rescue mission to save a  
23 downed pilot, Louis Zamperini’s airplane crashed due to  
24 mechanical failure, and he and two other airmen were the only  
25 survivors of the 11-man crew on board the airplane. One of the  
26 men died after 33 days, and Louis Zamperini and the other airman  
27 were stranded on a raft for a total of 47 days before washing ashore  
28 on a Pacific island and being taken as prisoners of war (POW) by  
29 the Japanese; and

30 WHEREAS, Louis Zamperini was tortured for the next two  
31 years and was only released and returned to the United States after  
32 the end of the war in the Pacific in 1945. After the war, he founded  
33 a camp for troubled youths called the Victory Boys Camp; and

34 WHEREAS, Louis Zamperini married Cynthia Applewhite in  
35 1946, to whom he remained married until her death in 2001. They  
36 had a daughter, Cynthia, and a son, Luke. His marriage became  
37 strained because of his nightmares reliving his World War II  
38 experiences, and he began drinking heavily, trying to forget his  
39 experiences as a POW; and

WHEREAS, In 1949, at the encouragement of his wife, Louis Zamperini reluctantly agreed to attend a Billy Graham crusade. Graham’s preaching reminded him of his prayers during his time on the life raft and his imprisonment, and Zamperini recommitted his life to Christ. Following this, he forgave his Japanese tormentors, and his nightmares ceased; and

WHEREAS, Louis Zamperini was a defiant, resourceful, and determined man. He became an Olympic athlete and survived a plane crash, being lost at sea, and the worst of a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp during World War II. In 1998, he carried the Olympic torch at the Winter Olympics held in Nagano, Japan. He also spent the last 65 years of his life sharing his faith and his philosophy of life with as many audiences as would invite him to speak. In his talks, he included the concepts of forgiveness, hardiness, preparation, and a new life in Christ; and

WHEREAS, Louis Zamperini was also quick-witted, fun-loving, humble, and extremely caring of other people; and

WHEREAS, On July 2, 2014, Louis Silvie Zamperini passed away at his home in Los Angeles, California, at 97 years of age. His dramatic life story (Olympian and World War II POW) has been told in various books, including the 2010 biography “Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption,” by Laura Hillenbrand and the December 2014 film “Unbroken,” directed by Angelina Jolie; and

WHEREAS, Louis Zamperini is survived by his son, Luke Zamperini, his daughter, Cynthia Garris, and one grandchild, Clay Zamperini; now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring,* That the Legislature hereby designates that portion of Interstate 405 from Redondo Beach Boulevard to South Western Avenue in the County of Los Angeles as the Louis Zamperini Memorial Highway; and be it further

*Resolved,* That the Department of Transportation is requested to determine the cost of appropriate signs consistent with the signing requirements for the state highway system showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources sufficient to cover that cost, to erect those signs; and be it further

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

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