

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 157

Adopted in Assembly May 16, 2016

Chief Clerk of the Assembly

Adopted in Senate August 11, 2016

Secretary of the Senate

This resolution was received by the Secretary of State this
_____ day of _____, 2016, at _____
o'clock ____M.

Deputy Secretary of State

RESOLUTION CHAPTER _____

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

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 157, 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.

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

WHEREAS, Louis Zamperini learned to box before he became a runner. His father taught him how to box so he could defend himself against bullies who taunted him because he could not speak English. Pete Zamperini, his older brother, encouraged him to try out for the track team at Torrance High School; and

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

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

WHEREAS, Two years later, in 1938, Louis Zamperini set a national collegiate mile record of 4:08.3, which stood for 15 years.

He subsequently graduated from the University of Southern California, and not long after that, when World War II broke out, he enlisted in September 1941 in the United States Army Air Corps and became a bombardier on a Consolidated B-24 bomber in the Pacific theater of operations; and

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

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

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

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

Attest:

Secretary of State