

Introduced by Senator Roth
(Coauthor: Assembly Member Medina)

April 9, 2015

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 38—Relative to memorial highways.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 38, as introduced, Roth. Memorial highways.

This measure would designate a specified portion of State Highway Route 91 in the County of Riverside as the Staff Sergeant Salvador J. Lara, Staff Sergeant Ysmael R. Villegas, and Sergeant Jesus S. Duran Memorial Highway. The measure would request the Department of Transportation to determine the cost of appropriate signs showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources covering that cost, to erect those signs.

Fiscal committee: yes.

1 WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Salvador J. Lara was born in
2 Riverside, California, in 1920 and is survived by his niece Vivian
3 Hernandez and his brother Alfonzo. Alfonzo accepted the Medal
4 of Honor on behalf of his late brother from President Barack
5 Obama during a White House ceremony held on March 18, 2014.
6 Staff Sergeant Lara died on September 1, 1945, and is buried at
7 the Lorraine American Cemetery and Memorial in Saint-Avold,
8 Moselle, France; and
9 WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Lara was one of 24 veterans awarded
10 the Medal of Honor through the National Defense Authorization
11 Act for Fiscal Year 2002 (Public Law 107-107) which called for
12 a review of Jewish American and Hispanic American veterans

1 from World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War to
2 ensure that Jewish American and Hispanic American veterans
3 deserving the Medal of Honor were not subject to prejudice; and

4 WHEREAS, Then-Private First Class Salvador J. Lara
5 distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity for his
6 valorous actions in Aprilia, Italy, May 27-28, 1944. During the
7 fight on May 27, he aggressively led his rifle squad in neutralizing
8 multiple enemy strong points and inflicting large numbers of
9 casualties on the enemy. The next morning, as his company
10 resumed the attack, Private First Class Lara sustained a severe leg
11 wound, but did not stop to receive first aid. Private First Class Lara
12 continued his exemplary performance until he captured his
13 objective; and

14 WHEREAS, Private First Class Lara's extraordinary heroism
15 and selflessness above and beyond the call of duty were in keeping
16 with the highest traditions of the United States Army and
17 demonstrated his ability and leadership as the squad leader of a
18 rifle squad with the 2nd Platoon, Company L, 180th Infantry, 45th
19 Infantry Division during combat operations against a determined
20 enemy; and

21 WHEREAS, Private First Class Lara achieved the rank of Staff
22 Sergeant and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross
23 (upgraded to the Medal of Honor on March 18, 2014), the Bronze
24 Star, the Purple Heart, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the
25 European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with two
26 Bronze Service Stars, the World War II Victory Medal, the
27 Presidential Unit Citation, the Combat Infantryman Badge, and
28 the Honorable Service Lapel Button—World War II; and

29 WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Ysmael "Smiley" R. Villegas was
30 a Mexican American who was born on March 21, 1924, and raised
31 in the Casa Blanca neighborhood in the City of Riverside,
32 California. On October 19, 1945, President Harry S. Truman
33 posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor to Staff Sergeant
34 Villegas, presenting the medal to his surviving family. Staff
35 Sergeant Villegas was the first Riverside County resident to ever
36 receive the Medal of Honor and the first veteran to be buried at
37 the Riverside National Cemetery when the cemetery opened in
38 1978; and

39 WHEREAS, On March 1, 1945, Staff Sergeant Villegas'
40 company found itself engaged in combat against Japanese forces

1 at the Villa Verde Trail on the island of Luzon in the Philippines,
2 in what is known today as the Battle of Luzon. His squad was
3 attacked by an enemy machinegun nest. Staff Sergeant Villegas
4 took it upon himself to save his squad by destroying the nest and
5 its occupants. For these actions, Villegas was awarded the Silver
6 Star; and

7 WHEREAS, On March 20, 1945, Staff Sergeant Villegas was
8 leading his squad at Villa Verde Trail in Luzon in the Philippines,
9 his unit advancing in a forward position, when they suddenly
10 clashed with a strongly entrenched group of Japanese soldiers who
11 commanded the surrounding area and were hiding in caves and
12 foxholes. Staff Sergeant Villegas moved boldly from man to man,
13 in the face of bursting grenades and demolition charges, through
14 heavy machinegun and rifle fire, to bolster the spirit of his
15 comrades. Inspired by his gallantry, his men pressed forward to
16 the crest of the hill. Numerous enemy riflemen, refusing to flee,
17 continued firing from their foxholes; and

18 WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Villegas upon his own initiative
19 attacked five enemy foxholes, killing all of the occupants, and was
20 mortally wounded when he attacked the sixth foxhole. Through
21 his heroism and indomitable fighting spirit, Staff Sergeant Villegas
22 inspired his men to a determined attack that swept the enemy from
23 the field; and

24 WHEREAS, The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) named Post
25 184 in Riverside, California, the “Ysmael R. Villegas Memorial
26 Casa Blanca Post” in his honor. A statue by sculptor Gary Courter,
27 called Villegas Memorial, was dedicated on May 27, 1995, and is
28 located on Main Street Civic Center Courtyard in the City of
29 Riverside. The Ysmael R. Villegas Middle School in the City of
30 Riverside is named in his honor; and

31 WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Villegas was survived by his mother
32 and father, and by five brothers and six sisters. In 2014, at a
33 memorial service to commemorate the Mexican American veterans
34 from the historic Casa Blanca community in the City of Riverside,
35 five of Villegas’ sisters and one brother were in attendance:
36 Rafaela, Lottie, Helen, Martha, Pat, and Art; and

37 WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Villegas was also awarded the Silver
38 Star, the Purple Heart, the American Campaign Medal, the
39 Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, the World War II Victory Medal,
40 and the Philippine Liberation Medal; and

1 WHEREAS, Sergeant Jesus S. Duran was born on July 26, 1948,
2 in Juarez, Mexico, and was the sixth of 12 siblings. He passed
3 away on February 17, 1977, and is survived by his daughter Tina
4 Duran-Ruvalcaba, who accepted the Medal of Honor on his behalf
5 from President Barack Obama on March 18, 2014, in a ceremony
6 at the White House. The following day, she received the Medal of
7 Honor flag from Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel in a ceremony
8 where Sergeant Duran was inducted into the Pentagon Hall of
9 Heroes; and

10 WHEREAS, Sergeant Duran, like Staff Sergeant Lara, was one
11 of 24 veterans awarded the Medal of Honor through the National
12 Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002; and

13 WHEREAS, Sergeant Duran joined the United States Army on
14 May 13, 1968, and was assigned to Company E, 2nd Battalion,
15 5th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) to support Search
16 and Destroy missions. During his service in the Vietnam War,
17 Sergeant Duran distinguished himself during combat operations
18 against an armed enemy in the Republic of Vietnam on April 10,
19 1969; and

20 WHEREAS, On that afternoon, upon learning that two seriously
21 wounded troopers lay helplessly pinned down under harassing fire,
22 then-Specialist Four Jesus S. Duran assaulted the suppressive
23 enemy positions, firing deadly bursts on the run. Mounting his
24 weapon on a log, he fired directly into the enemy's foxholes,
25 eliminating four and cutting down several others as they fled; and

26 WHEREAS, Specialist Four Duran then continued to pour
27 effective fire on the disorganized and fleeing enemy. His
28 extraordinary heroism and selflessness above and beyond the call
29 of duty, as well as his acts of gallantry and intrepidity, were in
30 keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect
31 great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army;
32 and

33 WHEREAS, Jesus S. Duran achieved the rank of Sergeant and,
34 upon leaving the military, pursued a career as a corrections officer
35 at a juvenile detention center in the City of San Bernardino,
36 California. While working there, he dedicated numerous hours of
37 personal time to mentor youth and lead them on educational trips.
38 Sergeant Duran married twice and had two children. He loved
39 spending time with all of his family; and

1 WHEREAS, Sergeant Duran also received the Bronze Star
2 Medal, the Air Medal, the Army Good Conduct Medal, the
3 National Defense Service Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal with
4 four Bronze Service Stars, the Combat Infantryman Badge, the
5 Sharpshooter Marksmanship Badge with Auto Rifle and the
6 Browning Automatic Rifle “BAR” Machine Gun, the Marksman
7 Marksmanship Badge with Rifle Bar, the Vietnam Campaign
8 Medal with 1960 Device, and the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry
9 Cross Unit Citations with Palm Device; now, therefore, be it

10 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly*
11 *thereof concurring,* That the Legislature hereby designates that
12 portion of State Highway Route 91 from Madison Street to the
13 State Highway Route 60, Interstate 215 interchange in the County
14 of Riverside as the Staff Sergeant Salvador J. Lara, Staff Sergeant
15 Ysmael R. Villegas, and Sergeant Jesus S. Duran Memorial
16 Highway; and be it further

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

23 *Resolved,* That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
24 this resolution to the Director of Transportation and to the author
25 for appropriate distribution.