

AMENDED IN SENATE MAY 6, 2015

Senate Concurrent Resolution

No. 38

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 amended, 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

1 Act for Fiscal Year 2002 (Public Law 107-107) which called for
2 a review of Jewish American and Hispanic American veterans
3 from World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War to
4 ensure that Jewish American and Hispanic American veterans
5 deserving the Medal of Honor were not subject to prejudice; and

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

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

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

31 WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Ysmael "Smiley" R. Villegas was
32 a Mexican American who was born on March 21, 1924, and raised
33 in the Casa Blanca neighborhood in the City of Riverside,
34 California. On October 19, 1945, President Harry S. Truman
35 posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor to Staff Sergeant
36 Villegas, presenting the medal to his surviving family. Staff
37 Sergeant Villegas was the first Riverside County resident to ever
38 receive the Medal of Honor and the first veteran to be buried at
39 the Riverside National Cemetery when the cemetery opened in
40 1978; and

1 WHEREAS, On March 1, 1945, Staff Sergeant Villegas’
2 company found itself engaged in combat against Japanese forces
3 at the Villa Verde Trail on the island of Luzon in the Philippines,
4 in what is known today as the Battle of Luzon. His squad was
5 attacked by an enemy machinegun nest. Staff Sergeant Villegas
6 took it upon himself to save his squad by destroying the nest and
7 its occupants. For these actions, Villegas was awarded the Silver
8 Star; and

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

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

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

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

39 WHEREAS, Staff Sergeant Villegas was also awarded the Silver
40 Star, the Purple Heart, the American Campaign Medal, the

1 Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, the World War II Victory Medal,
2 and the Philippine Liberation Medal; and

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

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

15 WHEREAS, Sergeant Duran joined the United States Army on
16 May 13, 1968, and was assigned to Company E, 2nd Battalion,
17 5th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) to support Search
18 and Destroy missions. During his service in the Vietnam War,
19 Sergeant Duran distinguished himself during combat operations
20 against an armed enemy in the Republic of Vietnam on April 10,
21 1969; and

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

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

35 WHEREAS, Jesus S. Duran achieved the rank of Sergeant and,
36 upon leaving the military, pursued a career as a corrections officer
37 at a juvenile detention center in the City of San Bernardino,
38 California. While working there, he dedicated numerous hours of
39 personal time to mentor youth and lead them on educational trips.

1 Sergeant Duran married twice and had two children. He loved
2 spending time with all of his family; and

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

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

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

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

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