

Introduced by Senator Gaines

July 1, 2015

Senate Joint Resolution No. 14—Relative to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

SJR 14, as introduced, Gaines. Islamic State in Iraq and Syria: religious and other persecution.

This measure would declare that there is an urgent need to protect religious minorities and other vulnerable groups from persecution by the Sunni Islamist terrorist group the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as it exercises its control over areas in Syria and Iraq. This measure would urge the President of the United States to expedite visa processing for Syria and Iraq’s minority groups and to lift the refugee quota cap in order to streamline the process of accepting them into the United States as refugees, would urge the Congress of the United States to pass House Resolution 1568, and would urge the United States Department of State to work with, among others, the Kurdistan Regional Government, the Iraqi central government, and neighboring countries to help secure safe havens for those claiming amnesty from Iraq.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, Iraq is currently embroiled in a political and
- 2 religious insurrection stemming from an Islamic State in Iraq and
- 3 Syria (ISIS)-led offensive that began in the Anbar Province and
- 4 has spread to key locations such as Mosul, Tikrit, and Samarra
- 5 and continues to engulf the region in violence and instability; and
- 6 WHEREAS, ISIS is a transnational Sunni insurgency whose
- 7 ideological and organizational roots lie in both al-Qaeda in Iraq

1 and the Syria-based Jabhat al-Nusra and has a stated mission of
2 establishing an Islamic state and a caliphate across the Levant
3 through violence towards Shiites, non-Muslims, and unsupportive
4 Sunnis; and

5 WHEREAS, ISIS has instituted a policy of suppression and
6 discrimination against women and against persons based on their
7 perceived sexual orientation; and

8 WHEREAS, Iraq's population is approximately 31,300,000
9 with 97 percent of that population identifying themselves as
10 Muslim while the approximately 3 percent of religious minorities
11 groups consist of Christians, Yezidis, Sabean Mandaeans, Baha'is,
12 Shabaks, Kakais, and Jews; and

13 WHEREAS, The Iraqi Christian population is estimated to be
14 between 400,000 and 850,000 with two-thirds being Chaldean,
15 one-fifth Assyrian, and the remainder consisting of Syriacs,
16 Protestants, Armenians, and Anglicans; and

17 WHEREAS, The Iraqi Constitution provides for religious
18 freedom by stating all of the following:

19 (1) "No law may be enacted that contradicts the principles of
20 democracy";

21 (2) "No law may be enacted that contradicts the rights and basic
22 freedoms stipulated in this Constitution";

23 (3) "[This Constitution] guarantees the full religious rights to
24 freedom of religious belief and practice of all individuals such as
25 Christians, Yazidis, and Mandaean Sabaeans"; and

26 WHEREAS, Over 500,000 people have been displaced by the
27 current ongoing violence in Iraq while reports have surfaced of
28 targeted harassment, persecution, and killings of Iraqi religious
29 minorities by ISIS with little to no protection from the Iraqi
30 government or other security forces; and

31 WHEREAS, ISIS recently issued a decree to all religious
32 minorities stating: "We offer them three choices: Islam; the
33 dhimma contract - involving payment of jizya; if they refuse this
34 they will have nothing but the sword"; and

35 WHEREAS, The fall of Mosul has sparked terror among the
36 Christian population because for the first time in 1,600 years there
37 was no mass held in the city; and

38 WHEREAS, Over 50 percent of Iraq's Christian population has
39 fled since the fall of Saddam Hussein, and 1,100,000 people of
40 diverse religious backgrounds remain internally displaced while

1 the government under Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has not
2 upheld its commitment to protect the rights of religious minorities;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, Eighty-four thousand nine hundred two Iraqis
5 resettled in the United States between 2007 and 2013 and over
6 300,000 Chaldean and Assyrians currently reside throughout the
7 country; especially in California; now, therefore, be it

8 *Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of*
9 *California, jointly*, That the Legislature of the State of California,
10 on behalf of its citizens, declares that there is an urgent need to
11 protect religious minorities and other vulnerable groups from
12 persecution by the Sunni Islamist insurgent and terrorist group the
13 Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as it expands its control over
14 areas in northwestern Iraq; and be it further

15 *Resolved*, That the California Legislature calls on the United
16 States Department of State to work with the Kurdistan Regional
17 Government, the Iraqi central government, neighboring countries,
18 the diaspora community in the United States, the United Nations
19 High Commissioner for Refugees, Chaldean representative leaders
20 in the United States, and other key stakeholders to help secure safe
21 havens for those claiming amnesty from Iraq; and be it further

22 *Resolved*, That the Legislature urges the Congress of the United
23 States to pass House Resolution 1568, which also urges the United
24 States to act swiftly on behalf of religious minorities that are under
25 the constant threat of persecution; and be it further

26 *Resolved*, That the Legislature urges the Congress to amend
27 House Resolution 1568 to include calls for the protection of victims
28 of persecution based on biological or preferred sexuality, gender,
29 ethnicity, race, nationality, or religious affiliation; and be it further

30 *Resolved*, That the Legislature urges President Barack Obama's
31 administration to expedite visa processing for Iraq's minority
32 groups and to lift the quota cap for Iraqi Christians in order to
33 streamline the process of accepting refugees; and be it further

34 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
35 this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United
36 States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the
37 Majority Leader of the Senate, to each Senator and Representative

- 1 from California in the Congress of the United States, and to the
- 2 author for appropriate distribution.

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