

Introduced by Senator Wolk
(Coauthor: Assembly Member Levine)

May 2, 2016

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 137—Relative to Police Officer Vilho Ahola Memorial Highway.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 137, as introduced, Wolk. Police Officer Vilho Ahola Memorial Highway.

This measure would designate a specified portion of State Highway 101 in the County of Sonoma as the Police Officer Vilho Ahola 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 that cost, to erect those signs.

Fiscal committee: yes.

1 WHEREAS, Vilho Ahola, the son of Finish immigrants, was
2 born on June 11, 1927, in Massachusetts and, at the age of 12,
3 went to work in the cranberry bogs to assist his family; and
4 WHEREAS, As an adult, Mr. Ahola served in the United States
5 Air Force before going to work for the Scituate Police Department
6 in Massachusetts; and
7 WHEREAS, Mr. Ahola moved to California in 1961 and
8 enrolled in the Santa Rosa Junior College law enforcement training
9 academy where he received his California Peace Officer Standards
10 and Training Law Enforcement Certificate and later joined the
11 Petaluma Police Department; and

1 WHEREAS, Officer Ahola and his wife Marjorie had two sons,
2 Dana Carl Ahola and Kurt Alan Ahola, and in 1964 he built his
3 own house in Penngrove, California, a rural area a short distance
4 from the City of Petaluma; and

5 WHEREAS, Officer Ahola, who was a member of the Petaluma
6 Elks Lodge, was an avid outdoorsman and qualified for the
7 Massachusetts and California state championship rifle teams and
8 the United States Olympic rifle marksmanship team; and

9 WHEREAS, On November 7, 1969, Officer Ahola was shot in
10 the neck while responding to a domestic disturbance as a Petaluma
11 Police Officer and when a bullet became lodged in his neck against
12 his spine, Officer Ahola was rendered quadriplegic; and

13 WHEREAS, After sustaining those serious injuries, Officer
14 Ahola lived an honorable life and became an inspiration to those
15 who knew him; and

16 WHEREAS, After he was shot, Officer Ahola spent more than
17 a year in hospitals undergoing therapy for his paralysis and, after
18 recovering enough from his injuries, he began volunteering
19 part-time for the Petaluma Police Department records division
20 where he always had a smile on his face and was a source of
21 inspiration to everyone who knew him in the police department;
22 and

23 WHEREAS, Officer Ahola worked in the records department
24 until 1989 when his fingers became too stiff to operate a computer
25 keyboard, but he remained active in other community activities,
26 including the Police Athletic League (PAL); and

27 WHEREAS, In the early 1970s, Officer Ahola helped to organize
28 the PAL and sought to build partnerships among youth and police
29 by organizing programs that brought police officers together with
30 youth in a positive environment; and

31 WHEREAS, Officer Ahola was very active in the local PAL
32 chapter teaching rifle marksmanship and firearms safety and, after
33 his death in 1998, one of Officer Ahola's former students said the
34 following: "I met Vilho Ahola through the PAL program at the
35 age of fourteen years in junior high school. Raised by a single
36 working mother I had little 'fatherly' influence in my life. A gentle
37 and giving man reduced to a wheelchair changed that for me. I
38 credit most of my success, positive attitude and manners to Vilho
39 Ahola. I am only one of hundreds of 'Ahola kids' that are around
40 today and benefitting from that great man and his program."; and

1 WHEREAS, Officer Ahola's will to survive and his dedication
2 to youth were an inspiration to all that knew him and, even after
3 suffering such tragic and traumatic injuries, Officer Ahola's
4 positive attitude and desire to make a difference impacted the
5 people around him far beyond what one would expect; and

6 WHEREAS, Officer Ahola was dedicated to his family,
7 including his wife Marjorie, who became his primary caretaker
8 and looked after him in the years after he was injured, and his two
9 sons, who grew up to be fine young men; and

10 WHEREAS, The Sonoma County Coroner determined that
11 Officer Ahola's death was directly related to the injuries he
12 sustained when shot in the line of duty and ruled that while his
13 death was not immediate, the shooting sentenced Officer Ahola
14 to a lifetime of pain and complications related to his paralysis until
15 the time of his eventual death on February 1, 1998; and

16 WHEREAS, Shortly after his death in 1998, Officer Ahola's
17 name was added to the national and California Peace Officer
18 Memorials; and

19 WHEREAS, There is no person more deserving of this memorial
20 dedication than Officer Vilho Ahola of the Petaluma Police
21 Department; now, therefore, be it

22 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly*
23 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature hereby designates the
24 portion of State Highway 101 from milepost marker 4.5 to milepost
25 marker 8.5 as the Police Officer Vilho Ahola Memorial Highway
26 to honor and memorialize the sacrifice made by Officer Ahola
27 when serving as a police officer in the City of Petaluma, California;
28 and be it further

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

34 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
35 this resolution to the Director of Transportation and to the author
36 for appropriate distribution.

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