

AMENDED IN SENATE JUNE 8, 2016

**Senate Concurrent Resolution**

**No. 137**

**Introduced by Senator Wolk**  
(Coauthor: Assembly Member Levine)

May 2, 2016

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

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

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

This measure would designate a specified ~~portion of interchange on~~ State Highway 101 in the County of Sonoma as the Police Officer Vilho Ahola Memorial Highway. *Interchange*. 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

1 and Training Law Enforcement Certificate and later joined the  
2 Petaluma Police Department; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 Ahola. I am only one of hundreds of ‘Ahola kids’ that are around  
2 today and benefitting from that great man and his program.”; and

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

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

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

18 WHEREAS, Shortly after his death in 1998, Officer Ahola’s  
19 name was added to the national and California Peace Officer  
20 Memorials; and

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

24 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly*  
25 *thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby designates the*  
26 *portion of State Highway 101 from milepost marker 4.5 to milepost*  
27 *marker 8.5 known as the “Old Redwood Highway Interchange,”*  
28 *located at the north end of the City of Petaluma as the Police*  
29 *Officer Vilho Ahola Memorial Highway Interchange to honor and*  
30 *memorialize the sacrifice made by Officer Ahola when serving as*  
31 *a police officer in the City of Petaluma, California; and be it further*

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

- 1     *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
- 2     this resolution to the Director of Transportation and to the author
- 3     for appropriate distribution.

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