

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 137

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 179

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

[Filed with Secretary of State September 9, 2016.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 137, Wolk. Police Officer Vilho Ahola Memorial Interchange.

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

WHEREAS, Vilho Ahola, the son of Finnish immigrants, was born on June 11, 1927, in Massachusetts and, at 12 years of age, went to work in the cranberry bogs to assist his family; and

WHEREAS, As an adult, Mr. Ahola served in the United States Air Force before going to work for the Scituate Police Department in Massachusetts; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ahola moved to California in 1961 and enrolled in the Santa Rosa Junior College law enforcement training academy where he received his California Peace Officer Standards and Training Law Enforcement Certificate and later joined the Petaluma Police Department; and

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, After he was shot, Officer Ahola spent more than a year in hospitals undergoing therapy for his paralysis and, after recovering enough

from his injuries, he began volunteering part time for the Petaluma Police Department records division where he always had a smile on his face and was a source of inspiration to everyone who knew him in the police department; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, In honor of Officer Ahola's years of dedicated service and sacrifice in the line of duty, it is appropriate to dedicate this memorial interchange in the name of Officer Vilho Ahola of the Petaluma Police Department; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby designates the portion of State Highway 101 known as the "Old Redwood Highway Interchange," located at the north end of the City of Petaluma as the Police Officer Vilho Ahola Memorial Interchange to honor and memorialize the sacrifice made by

Officer Ahola when serving as a police officer in the City of Petaluma, California; and be it further

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

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