

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 10

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 9

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 10—Relative to the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Capitol Park.

[Filed with Secretary of State March 18, 1997.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 10, Floyd. Veterans Memorials: The Wall That Heals.

This measure would encourage all Californians to take part in ceremonies concerning The Wall That Heals, and that all measures be taken to inform Californians of related ceremonies so that they are given an opportunity to remember and honor the service, efforts, and sacrifices of veterans.

WHEREAS, The State of California has the largest United States veterans population in the nation, comprising some 3.3 million armed services veterans (12.3 percent of the nationwide veteran population of nearly 27 million) who represent an impressive one-fifth of the state's total population; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that 20.6 million (77 percent) of the total veteran population alive today are wartime veterans, and, within California alone, nearly 300,000 of those veterans are disabled, and approximately one-eighth of these veterans have experienced substance abuse or post-traumatic stress disorders; and

WHEREAS, It is estimated that there are more than 3,000 American servicemen still prisoners of war (POW), missing in action (MIA), and unaccounted for in Vietnam and Korea; and

WHEREAS, According to figures from the 1996 California Department of Veterans Affairs, American participation and casualties from the following wars were estimated as: Mexican War (1846–48) 79,000 participants, 13,000 deaths in service; Indian Wars (1861–98) 106,000 participants, 1,000 deaths in service; United States Civil War (1861–65) 2,213,000 Union participants, 364,000 Union deaths in service, 1,000,000 Confederate participants, 134,000 Confederate deaths in service; Spanish-American War (1898–1902) 392,000 participants, 11,000 deaths in service; World War I (1917–18) 392,000 participants, 116,000 deaths in service; World War II (1940–45) 16,535,000 participants, 406,000 deaths in service; Korean War (1950–53) 5,764,143 participants, 33,651 deaths in service; Vietnam War (1964–73) 8,744,000 participants, 58,202 deaths in service; and the Persian Gulf War (1991) 467,539 participants, 148 deaths; and

WHEREAS, In times of peace, when the veteran's service is not needed, it is an unfortunate but irrevocable fact that Californians, like all other Americans, all too quickly forget that it is the courage and sacrifice of those veterans that preserve and maintain the freedom that we enjoy; and

WHEREAS, The practice of forgetting about our debt to our veterans took on an entirely different meaning when our Vietnam veterans returned home to discover, tragically, that not only did many Americans not want to honor and pay homage to them, indeed, many Americans wanted to forget them; and

WHEREAS, More than 350,000 California veterans served in Vietnam, which resulted in 40,000 of them being wounded and 5,822 being killed or missing in action, or more than 10 percent of the nation's total; and

WHEREAS, More California residents died in Vietnam than residents of any other state, and more Californians received the Medal of Honor, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart than veterans of any other state; and

WHEREAS, The Vietnam War divided Americans like no other event since the United States Civil War, and after nearly a decade of dissent and protest and of many Americans trying to forget the Vietnam War, many Americans ended up forgetting the Vietnam veterans who came home to no marching bands and no welcome home parades, and who went for years and years without any sort of positive recognition; and

WHEREAS, For many, many thousands of those veterans, the Vietnam War did not end, and has not ended, as they continue to fight their own personal war within themselves; and

WHEREAS, With the construction of the National Vietnam War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., many Americans finally found the will to remember, and all the homage due the Vietnam veterans could finally be expressed; and

WHEREAS, In many ways, the national memorial has done more to heal the wounds of the Vietnam War than any proclamation, or any parade, could do, since the memorial serves as a tribute to the sacrifice, a recognition of the loss, and a symbol of the wound that we began to heal, and in simple terms, the memorial serves as a mourning place where Americans can come to physically touch the memory of loved ones they lost or strangers they honor for their sacrifices; and

WHEREAS, The history of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial began when Herman Woods, a double amputee who served in the 1st Air Cavalry Division, United States Army (1970), returned to California from the dedication of the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial in our nation's capitol in Washington, D.C.; and

WHEREAS, Herman Woods began a grassroots effort to assist then Assembly Member Richard E. Floyd, a Korean War combat veteran,



in passing Floyd's measure, Assembly Bill No. 650, which proposed that a California Vietnam Veterans Memorial be built entirely from private funds, and it was then that former Captain Brien Thomas "B.T." Collins, a United States Army veteran who was a member of the Green Berets, who served two tours of duty in Vietnam, who was wounded, and who also later served in the California State Assembly, became involved with the memorial and his tireless efforts were a driving force in the establishment and completion of the memorial prior to his early death; and

WHEREAS, The newly formed Vietnam Veterans Memorial Commission was comprised of nine veterans, eight of whom served in Vietnam and who included the following persons: Linda J. McClenahan, Chairperson; Leo K. Thorsness, Congressional Medal of Honor winner and Vice Chairperson; Gregory C. Green, Treasurer; Abel A. Cota, Secretary; B.T. Collins, member; Don A. Drumheller, member; Jesse G. Ugalde, member; Senator Jim Ellis, member; Assembly Member Richard E. Floyd, member and author of Assembly Bill No. 650; and Jerri L. Dale, Executive Officer; led to the creation of the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the theme of which reflects "the overwhelming majority of those who were killed in Vietnam: 19-year old infantry soldiers, their youth, comradery, and fatigue of the war and [reflects] the American women who served," with the winning entry in the opening design competition being awarded to Michael Larson, a Marine Corps Vietnam veteran, and Thomas Chytrowski; and

WHEREAS, President Bill Clinton, in recently awarding the Presidential Medal of Freedom to former United States Senator Robert Dole, unveiled the winning design for still another memorial, this one a National World War II Memorial to pay homage to the 16 million men and women who served in that war; and

WHEREAS, For years and years, California has had plans for a memorial that will be privately financed, one that will honor all California veterans who have served in the armed services since statehood in 1850, a memorial that, hopefully, will be a reality by the close of 1997; and

WHEREAS, These monuments have revived California's interest in the sacrifice of all our veterans and have focused a renewed attention on our Vietnam veterans, many of whom, especially the homeless, simply have never had the resources to travel back to Washington, D.C. to visit the National Vietnam Veterans Memorial; and

WHEREAS, The Wall That Heals is a 250-foot wide replica of the National Memorial that travels all across America, giving veterans and nonveterans a chance to share a common bond of sacrifice with the 58,202 men and women who gave their lives in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, The Wall That Heals brings the souls of those 58,202 back home to their buddies, their wives and husbands, parents,



children, neighbors, and coworkers, and allows them to exist once more in the comfort and peace of familiar surroundings; and

WHEREAS, Assembly Member Richard E. Floyd has made arrangements for The Wall That Heals to be in Sacramento and in four additional sites in California from early February to March, 1997; and

WHEREAS, The Wall That Heals, like the memorial in Washington, D.C., transcends Vietnam by helping our nation renew its relationship with veterans of all wars, because viewers of the wall, from veterans to school children, will realize a deeper appreciation of the role that veterans have played throughout the history of our country; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That all Californians be encouraged to take part in ceremonies concerning The Wall That Heals, including opening ceremonies, when it is in an area near them, and that all steps and measures necessary to inform all Californians as to the date of those ceremonies and locating where The Wall That Heals will be sited, be taken so that all Californians will be given an opportunity to remember and honor the service, the efforts, and the sacrifices of those veterans, and to pay homage to those veterans who are still alive; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit a suitably prepared copy of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

