

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 185

**Introduced by Assembly Members Washington and
Hertzberg**

July 27, 1998

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 185—Relative to
Arizona Boys Ranch.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 185, as introduced, Washington. Arizona Boys
Ranch.

Existing law provides for the placement of wards of the
juvenile court at out-of-state residential facilities.

This measure would request the State Department of Social
Services to use funds that would otherwise have been used for
the support of wards at the Arizona Boys Ranch for other
specified purposes.

Fiscal committee: yes.

1 WHEREAS, The State Department of Social Services
2 acted quickly and appropriately when the department
3 withdrew funding and suspended the interstate compact
4 with the Arizona Boys Ranch based on the
5 recommendations of the California Investigative Team.
6 The California Investigative Team was formed by the
7 State Department of Social Services to review the
8 circumstances leading to the death of 16-year-old
9 Nicholas Contreras, who died March, 2, 1998, while
10 residing at the Arizona Boys Ranch. A majority of the

1 team recommended that a moratorium be imposed
2 against new placements at the ranch and that California's
3 young men be immediately removed. A minority of the
4 team concurred with the moratorium, but further
5 recommended that residents be permitted to complete
6 their programs; and

7 WHEREAS, Some of the young men residing at the
8 ranch witnessed Nicholaus Contreras' death and were
9 traumatized by that event; and

10 WHEREAS, As a result of the state's investigation,
11 counties are withdrawing young men from the program.
12 Los Angeles County, for example, returned all of its 90
13 young men who were residing at the Arizona Boys Ranch;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, The state's decision to withdraw
16 California's young men from the Arizona Boys Ranch is
17 not completely understood by the affected young men
18 even though it was the best course of action to protect
19 them, given the potential for physical and psychological
20 abuse at the ranch; and

21 WHEREAS, California's Department of the Youth
22 Authority was not appropriate for placement of many of
23 these young men because their offenses were not serious,
24 and these are young men who have a strong potential to
25 reenter society as productive citizens; and

26 WHEREAS, Now that these young men have returned
27 or will be returning home, it is appropriate to take steps
28 to minimize any disruption in their progress towards
29 reform and to assess their needs prior to alternative
30 placement; and

31 WHEREAS, Some of the young men who returned to
32 Los Angeles County were participating in education and
33 job training programs at the Arizona Boys Ranch and
34 were removed before they could complete their
35 programs; and

36 WHEREAS, Some of the young men have expressed
37 concerns about their future, particularly those who were
38 working hard to turn their lives around; and

39 WHEREAS, Juveniles who are survivors of abuse or
40 neglect may be vulnerable to trauma, depression, and



1 frustration when they experience multiple abrupt
2 removals from their residences, and their road to
3 recovery could be irreparably disrupted; and

4 WHEREAS, While the actions of personnel at the
5 Arizona Boys Ranch resulted in California's decision to
6 remove the young men from that placement, some of the
7 young men were making solid progress and should have
8 an opportunity to complete the programs in their home
9 state; now, therefore, be it

10 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the*
11 *Senate thereof concurring,* That the Legislature of the
12 State of California hereby requests the State Department
13 of Social Services to use funds that would have otherwise
14 been used to provide for care at the Arizona Boys Ranch
15 to support counties in making placement plans that
16 would further the progress of these young men; that in
17 making these placement plans, funds should be spent on
18 assessments of the young mens' psychological,
19 educational, and physical ability to handle any placement
20 options that counties may consider; and that the funds
21 also should be dedicated to analyzing the programs that
22 the young men participated in prior to being returned to
23 their home counties; and be it further

24 *Resolved,* That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly
25 transmit copies of this resolution to the appropriate
26 persons at the State Department of Social Services, and
27 to the author for appropriate distribution.

