

Introduced by Senator Lee

January 16, 1998

An act relating to the Chabot Observatory and Science Center, and making an appropriation therefor.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 1415, as introduced, Lee. Chabot Observatory and Science Center.

Existing law does not contain any provision relating to the Chabot Observatory and Science Center.

This bill would make various legislative findings and declarations relative to the Chabot Observatory and Science Center, a joint powers agency created by the City of Oakland, the Oakland Unified School District, and the East Bay Regional Park District, and would appropriate an unspecified sum from the General Fund to the joint powers agency to fund the completion of a new Chabot Observatory and Science Center facility and its programs.

Vote: ²/₃. Appropriation: yes. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of
2 the following:

3 (a) The historic Chabot Observatory began as a public
4 observatory in downtown Oakland, serving Oakland
5 citizens and the greater Bay Area community, and

1 through its programs has welcomed and educated over
2 two million visitors since 1883.

3 (b) In the early 20th century, the Observatory was
4 administered by the Oakland Unified School District
5 which made the facility an integral part of formal science
6 education programs and also made it available for a large
7 public program.

8 (c) The current Chabot Observatory and Science
9 Center facility, consisting of a 1915-era observatory
10 building, a separate planetarium, and several temporary
11 classrooms and laboratories, severely limits the science
12 center's ability to fulfill the vision for science education
13 due to technological and structural safety issues,
14 including its location directly on an active rift of the
15 Hayward Fault and the interference from surrounding
16 city lights that have encroached in the years since the
17 observatory's construction and affect viewing through its
18 historic 8-inch and 20-inch public telescopes.

19 (d) In 1989, Oakland's interest in having a regional
20 science center that was responsive to the science
21 education needs of its children and neighboring
22 communities led to the creation of a joint powers agency
23 by the City of Oakland, the Oakland Unified School
24 District, and the East Bay Regional Park District, and
25 these partner agencies have together contributed over
26 \$19,000,000 to this project.

27 (e) The vision of the new Chabot Observatory and
28 Science Center is to create the nation's premier model for
29 teaching science and technologies, where one can
30 imagine, understand, and learn to shape the future
31 through science.

32 (f) The Chabot Observatory and Science Center's
33 goals are as follows:

34 (1) To present more effective and engaging ways for
35 children and adults to explore science and technology.

36 (2) To train teachers in science education's best
37 practices and new teaching technologies, and equip them
38 with resources to use these in the classroom.

39 (3) To inspire students and their families to pursue
40 higher levels of scientific literacy.



1 (4) To demonstrate the relevance of science and
2 technology in everyday living.

3 (g) California's youth must be science-literate and
4 comfortable with technology to be competitive job
5 seekers, and it is widely recognized that the quality of
6 science, mathematics, and environmental education
7 needs to be improved in California and nationwide, and
8 that there are endemic cycles of low achievement that
9 persist in many high minority-enrolled public schools and
10 low-income neighborhoods.

11 (h) These deficiencies are particularly pressing in the
12 diverse San Francisco Bay Area, where the growth in
13 science and technology-related industries has created an
14 enormous demand for educated, skilled workers.

15 (i) Many respected researchers have demonstrated
16 the need for a fundamental shift in methods of science
17 teaching to emphasize curriculum that is project-based,
18 anchored in a "real world context," discovery oriented,
19 and interdisciplinary, and the education of teachers must
20 be approached in a different way to reflect new
21 approaches to curriculum, activities, and student needs.

22 (j) The Chabot Observatory and Science Center
23 programs complement and supplement the school
24 district's efforts to implement a more effective
25 educational model by offering a wide range of programs
26 and resources that schools and districts cannot provide on
27 their own.

28 (k) The Chabot Observatory and Science Center
29 places a major emphasis on engaging populations that are
30 historically not well represented in science and
31 technology education, including women, minorities, and
32 low-income youth.

33 (l) The Chabot Observatory and Science Center has
34 planned to build a new, \$55,000,000, 77,000 square foot
35 science education center in the Joaquin Miller Park of
36 Oakland, to fulfill these goals and offer new programs for
37 the people of the Bay Area.

38 (m) The Chabot Observatory and Science Center has
39 raised over \$45,000,000 toward that \$55,000,000 goal to
40 build a new science education center, including a



1 \$17,500,000 grant from the United States Air Force Office
2 of Scientific Research.

3 (n) The citizens of Oakland in 1996 voted approval for
4 \$6,500,000 for this new facility through the general
5 obligation bond act known as Measure I.

6 (o) The Chabot Observatory and Science Center is
7 planning to raise the final \$10,000,000 to complete this
8 project from various sources over the next two years.

9 (p) The Chabot Observatory and Science Center has
10 raised over \$1,500,000 in peer-reviewed scientific grants,
11 \$785,000 from private foundations, \$800,000 from
12 corporations, and over \$1,500,000 from individuals to
13 support planning and design of this new science center.

14 (q) This new facility is scheduled to open in 1999, and
15 will include the magnificent historic Chabot telescopes;
16 a new 36-inch computerized telescope; a state-of-the art
17 planetarium; interactive science exhibits for children,
18 adults, and families; a Challenger Center space station
19 and mission control simulator; a telescope makers'
20 workshop; a fiber optic-linked multimedia center; a
21 virtual science center for continuous on-line access and
22 education in homes, communities, libraries, and schools;
23 infrared technology for multilingual programs; and
24 flexible, integrated laboratory spaces for science
25 exploration and education.

26 (r) This new science center will become a centerpiece
27 for public astronomy and science education in the
28 country, and will contribute toward the improvement of
29 science education and technological literacy for
30 California students, teachers, and families.

31 (s) _____ dollars (\$_____) of support from the
32 state will make possible the timely completion of the new
33 Chabot Observatory and Science Center by October
34 1999, with all facilities available to the public and all
35 education programs in place to serve the children,
36 teachers, and families of the state.

37 SEC. 2. The sum of _____ dollars (\$_____) is
38 hereby appropriated from the General Fund to the
39 Chabot Observatory and Science Center, a joint powers
40 agency created by the City of Oakland, the Oakland



1 Unified School District, and the East Bay Regional Park
2 District, to fund the completion of the new Chabot
3 Observatory and Science Center facility in Oakland and
4 its programs for science education for the people of the
5 state.

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