

AMENDED IN SENATE MAY 6, 2010
AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 24, 2010
CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2009–10 REGULAR SESSION

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 113

Introduced by Assembly Member Caballero

January 27, 2010

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 113—Relative to the Bracero Memorial Highway.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 113, as amended, Caballero. Bracero Memorial Highway.

This measure would designate a specified portion of State Highway Route 101 ~~between Soledad and Chualar~~, in Monterey County, as the Bracero Memorial Highway. This 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 those costs, to erect those signs.

Fiscal committee: yes.

- 1 WHEREAS, Mexican nationals, known as Braceros, were legally
- 2 contracted to work mostly in the agricultural and railroad industries
- 3 in the Salinas Valley, and elsewhere, to alleviate a labor shortage
- 4 during World War II; and
- 5 WHEREAS, Two tragic, preventable incidents illustrate their
- 6 unsafe working conditions; and
- 7 WHEREAS, On June 17, 1958, approximately 50 Mexican
- 8 Braceros were being transported from a Soledad labor camp to
- 9 perform field work in the Salinas Valley. The truck transporting

1 them was a flat bed truck converted to have a covered metal top,
2 wooden benches, and only narrow exits at the end of the vehicle;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, Purportedly, two gasoline cans were in the truck
5 for two days prior to the incident, which the driver claimed were
6 emptied the day before the accident. The driver did not inform the
7 passengers that they should not smoke because there were gasoline
8 cans in the truck; and

9 WHEREAS, One of the men lit a match igniting a flash fire in
10 the passenger compartment of the vehicle; and

11 WHEREAS, Twelve men died immediately of asphyxia and
12 second-, third-, and fourth-degree burns as they were trapped in
13 the vehicle, two more men later died, and an additional 17 Mexican
14 Braceros were hospitalized; and

15 WHEREAS, At that time, there was no state law prohibiting
16 carrying gasoline cans in vehicles, and no criminal charges were
17 brought; and

18 WHEREAS, The National Safety Council considered the fire
19 the worst noncollision vehicle tragedy in the nation since 1944;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, On September 17, 1963, on a lonely stretch of
22 railroad track paralleling State Highway Route 101 at Thomas
23 Ranch Road in the City of Chualar, near Salinas, California, 32
24 Bracero farmworkers lost their lives and another 24 were injured
25 in the biggest single fatal vehicle accident in California history
26 and the worst of its type in United States' history; and

27 WHEREAS, The Braceros who were injured and killed were
28 being transported in a truck converted into a bus without the
29 approval of, or inspection by, any government agency, on the way
30 to harvest celery for one dollar (\$1) per hour, when struck by an
31 oncoming train; and

32 WHEREAS, Legal immigrant farmworkers continue to cross
33 the border to work in many parts of California without being
34 provided safe working conditions or being treated with dignity
35 and respect; and

36 WHEREAS, In recognition of the Braceros' contributions and
37 sacrifice in the Salinas Valley and elsewhere in California, it would
38 be a fitting tribute to designate a portion of State Highway Route
39 101, between Soledad and Chualar, in Monterey County, as the
40 Bracero Memorial Highway; now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
2 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature hereby designates the 15
3 mile portion of State Highway Route 101 from ~~exit 302, south of~~
4 ~~Soledad~~, milepost 312 to exit 317, south of Chualar, in Monterey
5 County as the Bracero Memorial Highway; and be it further

6 *Resolved*, That the Department of Transportation is requested
7 to determine the cost of appropriate signs consistent with the
8 signing requirements for the state highway system showing this
9 special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate
10 sources sufficient to cover the cost, to erect those signs; and be it
11 further

12 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
13 of this resolution to the Department of Transportation and to the
14 author for appropriate distribution.