

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 123

Introduced by Assembly Member Chesbro

February 12, 2010

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 123—Relative to the California Memorial Project Remembrance Day.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 123, as introduced, Chesbro. California Memorial Project Remembrance Day.

This measure would proclaim the 3rd Monday of each September as California Memorial Project Remembrance Day in California, to honor and restore dignity to individuals who lived and died in California institutions.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, Since 1852 when the first California state institution
2 opened, the state has provided services to persons with disabilities
3 in state institutions, including state hospitals and developmental
4 centers; and
5 WHEREAS, From the mid-1880s to the 1960s, more than 45,000
6 individuals passed away while residents of a state institution, and
7 information about these patients is incomplete; and
8 WHEREAS, For the most part, the remains of the individuals
9 who died at state institutions were placed in unmarked or numbered
10 graves in mass sites, where numbered markers long ago
11 disappeared and many records identifying where bodies were
12 buried have been misplaced or destroyed; and

1 WHEREAS, Some of the state institutions involved include the
2 following 14 institutes: Agnews Developmental Center, Atascadero
3 State Hospital, Camarillo State Hospital, DeWitt State Hospital,
4 Fairview Developmental Center, Lanterman Developmental Center,
5 Mendocino State Hospital, Metropolitan State Hospital, Modesto
6 State Hospital, Napa State Hospital, Patton State Hospital,
7 Porterville Developmental Center, Sonoma Developmental Center,
8 and Stockton State Hospital; and

9 WHEREAS, Gravesites of unknown individuals who have
10 passed away while living in a state institution include, but are not
11 limited to:

12 (a) The cremated remains of 2,284 individuals who died at the
13 Modesto State Institution and Stockton Developmental Center at
14 Park View in Manteca.

15 (b) The remains of many individuals who received treatment at
16 the Metropolitan State Hospital in the early 1980s relocated to area
17 cemeteries.

18 (c) Napa State Hospital, where from 1875 to 1924, inclusive,
19 an estimated 4,368 individuals were buried. Napa State Hospital
20 also interred residents at the St. Helena Public Cemetery, a local
21 paupers field.

22 (d) Patton State Hospital, where from 1893 to 1934, inclusive,
23 an estimated 2,024 individuals were buried.

24 (e) The remains of 1,418 individuals were buried in a cemetery
25 now located in a field on the campus of the Sonoma Developmental
26 Center; and

27 WHEREAS, When some state institutions closed, they sold their
28 land and exhumed remains to county cemeteries, and the California
29 Memorial Project has not identified all of the county cemeteries
30 where former residents of state institutions have been interred; and

31 WHEREAS, The California Memorial Project is a collaboration
32 of the California Network of Mental Health Clients, Disability
33 Rights California, and People First California, that partners with
34 the State Department of Mental Health and the Department of
35 Developmental Services, to honor and restore dignity to individuals
36 who lived and died in state institutions; and

37 WHEREAS, The legislation authored by Senator Wesley
38 Chesbro establishing the partnership between the California
39 Memorial Project and the state intended to identify the location of
40 gravesites at existing state institutions, identify the names of the

1 patients whose remains were donated for medical research and the
2 entity to which the remains were donated, work with the State
3 Department of Mental Health and other state agencies to research
4 the records of deaths and burials at cemeteries located on state
5 institution grounds, and develop a plan for the restoration of
6 cemeteries and gravesites of institutionalized persons; and

7 WHEREAS, The goals of the California Memorial Project
8 include to restore cemeteries or graves where individuals from
9 state institutions are buried, to preserve the history of the residents
10 of state institutions, and to document the history of the client and
11 consumer movement in California; and

12 WHEREAS, To further its mission, the California Memorial
13 Project restores and memorializes the cemeteries at state institutions
14 and county cemeteries, and works to place memorials at cemeteries
15 and other sites to remember people who have died in state
16 institutions. Two monuments have been placed so far, one erected
17 on the California State University (CSU) Stanislaus campus, and
18 another at the Stockton Rural Cemetery where 42 sets of remains
19 of individuals who died in state institutions unearthed at CSU
20 Stanislaus were reinterred. Future plans include a Napa State
21 Hospital Memorial, a monument at the Patton State Hospital, and
22 a boulder monument to be placed at the Ukiah Cemetery in honor
23 of individuals who died while institutionalized at the Mendocino
24 State Hospital; and

25 WHEREAS, Beginning in 2003 the California Memorial Project
26 has held a Remembrance Day to remember and honor individuals
27 who lived and died in state institutions on the third Monday of
28 each September, the anniversary of the signing of the legislation
29 that established the California Memorial Project partnership with
30 the state; and

31 WHEREAS, On the September 21, 2009, Remembrance Day,
32 over 700 community members, self-advocates, family, friends,
33 state institution survivors, and disability advocates gathered at the
34 Parkview Cemetery in Manteca, Napa State Hospital in Napa,
35 Metropolitan State Hospital in Norwalk, Patton State Hospital in
36 Patton, Hillcrest Cemetery in Porterville, Agnews Historic
37 Cemetery in Santa Clara, Sonoma Developmental Center in
38 Eldridge, Stockton Rural Cemetery in Stockton, and Ukiah
39 Cemetery in Ukiah, for Remembrance Day ceremonies; and

1 WHEREAS, In California's recent history, numerous
2 Californians with disabilities were institutionalized and died in
3 state facilities. Today, however, many people with disabilities live
4 full and productive lives in the community; and

5 WHEREAS, Attention to the California Memorial Project and
6 its work to restore cemeteries, create memorials, develop oral
7 histories, and hold Remembrance Day ceremonies to honor those
8 individuals are critical pieces of California's history and serve as
9 an opportunity to reflect upon the strides made in reducing the
10 stigma of disability, including psychiatric and developmental
11 disability, as well as promoting community awareness and
12 education; and

13 WHEREAS, Efforts to restore dignity to individuals whose
14 remains are buried in gravesites on state institution lands deserve
15 recognition and support; now, therefore, be it

16 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
17 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature of State of California
18 hereby proclaims the third Monday of each September as California
19 Memorial Project Remembrance Day; and be it further

20 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
21 of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.