

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 37

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 93

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 37—Relative to Robert Louis Stevenson’s Historic Trail to Silverado.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 20, 2010.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

SCR 37, Wiggins. Robert Louis Stevenson’s Historic Trail to Silverado.

This measure would designate a specified portion of State Highway Route 29 in Napa County as Robert Louis Stevenson’s Historic Trail to Silverado. The 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 that cost, to erect those signs.

WHEREAS, In the 1850s, volunteers built the Old Bull Trail from what is today the City of Calistoga over Mount St. Helena in Napa County to what is today Middletown in Lake County; and

WHEREAS, Due to grades exceeding 35 percent along the Old Bull Trail, which prevented wagon travel, the Legislature, in 1866, authorized John Lawley to construct a private toll road to replace most of the Old Bull Trail starting approximately 1.5 miles north of the City of Calistoga; and

WHEREAS, The toll road over Mount St. Helena was completed in 1868 with grades of just 12 percent. This toll road is still in use today as a public road and is known both as the “Old Toll Road” and as “Lawley Road”; and

WHEREAS, In 1872, John Lawley, along with William Montgomery and William Patterson, founded the Monitor Ledge Mine on Mount St. Helena just off the Old Toll Road and later renamed that mine and the surrounding community “Silverado”; and

WHEREAS, During one point in its short three-year life, the mining town of Silverado housed over 1,000 people. Many more people came and went during that time in search of fortunes, every one of whom traveled the toll road and the 1.5 mile remnant of the Old Bull Trail that connected that toll road to Calistoga and to the rest of the Napa Valley; and

WHEREAS, In the summer of 1880, a young author, running low on cash, and his new bride left their honeymoon suite in the resort town of Calistoga to become squatters in the mining town of Silverado, which had been abandoned five years earlier; and

WHEREAS, One hundred twenty-five years ago, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Silverado Squatters*, a travelogue detailing the young author’s trip to Napa Valley, was published for the first time; and

WHEREAS, In *The Silverado Squatters*, the best-selling author of *Treasure Island* and *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* introduced the world to the beauty of the Napa Valley and the quality of its wine, famously describing it as “bottled poetry”; and

WHEREAS, In a chapter of *The Silverado Squatters* entitled “Starry Drive,” Robert Louis Stevenson recounted the brilliant night sky above the 1.5 mile remnant of the Old Bull Trail as he rambled back to his honeymoon perch one summer evening. Few roads have ever been described so vividly; and

WHEREAS, In 1921, a local farm bureau successfully petitioned the County of Napa to name a series of rough roads and trails running along the eastern spine of the Napa Valley, known collectively as the “Old Back Road,” the Silverado Trail after the mining town Robert Louis Stevenson made famous; and

WHEREAS, Although that collection of roads running along Napa Valley’s eastern spine ended at Tubbs Lane just north of the Old Toll Road, the County of Napa ended the newly named Silverado Trail 1.5 miles short of the Old Toll Road because the county was making arrangements to turn that 1.5 mile stretch of road over to the state to incorporate it into a new modern highway to be built by Lake County; and

WHEREAS, As a result of Napa County’s decision to incorporate this stretch of historic road into a modern highway, the history of this pioneer pathway, Robert Louis Stevenson’s “Starry Drive” and the last leg of the trail to Silverado, has been lost until now; and

WHEREAS, That stretch of road predates John Lawley’s Old Toll Road, was originally built by California pioneers in the 1850s, shortly after California’s statehood, as part of the Old Bull Trail, and is now memorialized by a historical marker in Middletown, Lake County; and

WHEREAS, That stretch of road also predates the City of Calistoga, which was formed in 1867, and Lake County, which was carved out of Napa County in 1861; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the forgotten last leg of the trail to Silverado, the portion of State Highway Route 29 in Napa County from post mile 37.9 to post mile 39.5, is recognized for its historical importance in the development of California and particularly of Napa and Lake Counties; and be it further

Resolved, That the portion of State Highway Route 29 from post mile 37.9 to post mile 39.5 in Napa County is designated as Robert Louis Stevenson’s Historic Trail to Silverado; and be it further

Resolved, That the Department of Transportation is requested to determine the cost of appropriate signs consistent with the signing requirements for the state highway system showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources covering that cost, to erect those signs; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the Department of Transportation and the author for appropriate distribution.

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