

Senate Joint Resolution

No. 6

Introduced by Senator Lowenthal

April 1, 2009

Senate Joint Resolution No. 6—Relative to pedestrian safety.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 6, as amended, Lowenthal. Pedestrian safety.

This measure would urge the United States Congress to pass, and the President to sign, the ~~Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act~~ and the ~~President to support efforts to conduct appropriate research and develop minimum noise standards for new motor vehicles.~~

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, Motor vehicles designed to provide the desirable
2 benefits of reducing harmful pollutants and operating with greater
3 fuel efficiency include gasoline-electric hybrid and electric-only
4 vehicles, and in the foreseeable future may include vehicles
5 powered by hydrogen fuel cell and other engine designs that rely
6 on fuels and technologies other than the gasoline-powered internal
7 combustion engine; and
8 WHEREAS, These vehicle engine designs operate or are likely
9 to operate with virtually no sound being produced by the vehicle;
10 and
11 WHEREAS, The total number of hybrid motor vehicles sold
12 per year in the United States is growing dramatically, and may
13 someday equal or exceed the number of internal combustion engine
14 motor vehicles on the nation's roads; and

1 WHEREAS, With its large population and its ongoing leadership
2 in the promotion of fuel efficient motor vehicles, California has a
3 disproportionately high number of alternative fuel vehicles
4 operating on its streets; and

5 WHEREAS, Blind pedestrians cannot locate and evaluate traffic
6 by sight and instead must listen to traffic to discern its speed,
7 direction, and other attributes in order to travel safely and
8 independently; and

9 WHEREAS, Other people, including pedestrians who are not
10 blind, bicyclists, runners, and small children, benefit from
11 multisensory information available from vehicle traffic, including
12 the sound of vehicle engines; and

13 WHEREAS, When operating on their electric engines, hybrid
14 vehicles cannot be heard by blind people and others, rendering
15 those vehicles dangerous when driving on the street, emerging
16 from driveways, moving through parking lots, and in other
17 situations where pedestrians and vehicles come into proximity
18 with each other; and

19 WHEREAS, Failure to take immediate action to ensure that
20 blind pedestrians can hear hybrid and other silent vehicles in all
21 phases of their operation will inevitably lead to pedestrian injuries
22 and fatalities; and

23 WHEREAS, These accidents are preventable through vehicle
24 designs which take into account the multisensory nature of traffic
25 detection and avoidance, and require that vehicles emit a minimum
26 level of sound designed to alert all pedestrians, especially blind
27 pedestrians, to the presence of these vehicles; and

28 WHEREAS, Senate Bill 1174, which passed in 2008, directed
29 the California Energy Resources Conservation and Development
30 Commission (CEC) to convene a Quiet Motorized Vehicle and
31 Safe Mobility Committee to investigate strategies to increase
32 pedestrian safety around electric and other quiet vehicles; and

33 WHEREAS, Senate Bill 1174 required the CEC to convene a
34 committee, to be comprised of representatives of vehicle
35 manufacturers, the blind or visually impaired pedestrian
36 community, insurance industry, vehicle research entities, and law
37 enforcement organizations, including, but not limited to, the
38 Department of the California Highway Patrol; and

39 WHEREAS, Senate Bill 1174 directed the committee to
40 research, identify, and make recommendations to the CEC on

1 strategies to ensure that all motorized road vehicles, regardless of
2 engine type or configuration, emit sound sufficient to be heard and
3 localized; and

4 WHEREAS, Senate Bill 1174, also required the CEC to make
5 recommendations based on the research conducted that are to
6 include, but not be limited to, proposed legislation and regulations,
7 needed research or technology, and funding options for
8 implementing recommendations recognizing the need for urgent
9 action in this matter by providing for the funding of collaborative
10 research into methodologies that would enable pedestrians to hear
11 hybrid vehicles; and

12 WHEREAS, The Governor's veto of Senate Bill 1174 was based
13 not on a failure to recognize the severity of the problem, but rather
14 the belief that federal funding for this research was available; and

15 WHEREAS, Although recently enacted provisions of federal
16 law require a report to be prepared by June of this year on this
17 problem, funding has not yet been made available to conduct the
18 research necessary to find a uniformly applicable and appropriate
19 solution and to adopt national standards based upon that research;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, The United States Congress is considering the
22 Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act, HR 734, which would direct
23 the United States Department of Transportation to conduct the
24 appropriate research and develop minimum noise standards for
25 new motor vehicles; now, therefore, be it

26 *Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of*
27 *California, jointly, That the California State Legislature calls on*
28 *the United States Congress to pass, and the President to sign, HR*
29 *734 urges the United States Congress and the President to*
30 *recognize the severity of the problem and support efforts to conduct*
31 *appropriate research and develop minimum noise standards for*
32 *new motor vehicles; and be it further*

33 *Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit a copy of*
34 *this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United*
35 *States, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Majority*
36 *Leader of the United States Senate, and to each Senator and*
37 *Representative from California in the Congress of the United*
38 *States.*

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