

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 79

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 24

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 79—Relative to Portuguese Heritage Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State June 2, 2010.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 79, Denham. Portuguese Heritage Month.

This bill would recognize the month of June as Portuguese Heritage Month.

WHEREAS, In September of 1542, Portuguese explorer João Rodrigues Cabrillo sailed a ship into San Diego Bay and became the first European to explore the land now known as California. Cabrillo explored the California coast, and is credited with numerous coastal discoveries; and

WHEREAS, Mathias de Sousa was the first Portuguese immigrant on record, arriving in Maryland in 1634. Mr. de Sousa and other early Portuguese immigrants came to the United States to escape persecution because of their Jewish faith; and

WHEREAS, In 1870, Portuguese immigrants began arriving in the United States in relatively large numbers. The majority of these Portuguese immigrants were men from the Azores, who were primarily recruited to work on American whaling ships and to farm; and

WHEREAS, Many Portuguese Americans settled in the Santa Clara and San Joaquin Valleys. The thriving agricultural industry of the late 19th and 20th centuries virtually guaranteed a job for anyone who was willing to work; and

WHEREAS, Between 1900 and 1940, as much as one-half of the Portuguese community in California owned or operated a dairy farm, worked on a dairy farm, or worked in a dairy-supporting industry. Applying the Portuguese belief in hard work and thriftiness, along with additional labor from family members, a Portuguese settler could earn enough to reinvest in his business, buying land and more dairy cows; and

WHEREAS, On Sundays, Portuguese Americans often congregate to celebrate their native religious festivals. In particular, they celebrate the Blessed Sacrament festival, the Holy Ghost festival, the Santo Cristo festival, the Feast Day of Our Lady of Fatima, and more recently, Dia de Portugal. These festivals provide an opportunity for young children to experience the culture of their ancestors who immigrated from Portugal. The festivals are famous for good food, laughter, bloodless bull fights, art, and native dances. In the San Joaquin and Santa Clara Valleys, large gatherings and cultural

events are held to celebrate Portuguese American contributions to California society; and

WHEREAS, In 1994, the University of California, Berkeley established The Portuguese Studies Program. Included among the many goals of the program is the goal “to spotlight the crucial and complex but often overlooked experience and contributions of the Portuguese American community”; and

WHEREAS, Among the great Portuguese Americans who have contributed significantly to this country are: composer John Philip Sousa, best known for composing “Stars and Stripes Forever”; poet Emma Lazarus, best known for her sonnet about the Statue of Liberty, “The New Colossus”; architect William L. Pereira, best known for designing the Transamerica Pyramid in San Francisco; and singer and actress Carmen Miranda. Many Portuguese Americans have also served with distinction in local, state, and federal office; and

WHEREAS, Portuguese Americans have truly made valuable and substantial contributions to every facet of California life. Portuguese Americans continue to thrive in agricultural communities of the Santa Clara and San Joaquin Valleys. The Portuguese Heritage Society of California designated the second Saturday of June as a day to celebrate Portuguese culture through music, dance, art, cooking, parades, and other festivities; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby declares June as the month of celebrating Portuguese national heritage; and be it further

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