

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 91

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 115

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 91—Relative to Valley Fever Awareness Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 18, 2014.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 91, Fuller. Valley Fever Awareness Month.

This measure would declare August 2014 as Valley Fever Awareness Month.

WHEREAS, Valley Fever (coccidioidomycosis), a progressive, multisymptom, respiratory disorder, is a debilitating disease; and

WHEREAS, Valley Fever is caused by the inhalation of tiny airborne fungi that live in the soil but are released into the air by soil disturbance or wind; and

WHEREAS, Valley Fever attacks the respiratory system, causing infections that can lead to symptoms that resemble a cold, influenza, or pneumonia; and

WHEREAS, If left untreated or mistreated, infection can spread from the lungs into the bloodstream, causing inflammation to the skin, permanent damage to lung and bone tissue, and swelling of the membrane surrounding the brain, leading to meningitis, which can be devastating and even fatal; and

WHEREAS, Once serious symptoms of Valley Fever appear, including pneumonia and labored breathing, prompt treatment with often toxic antifungal drugs must be given, which is especially disagreeable for patients who require the drugs to be injected beneath the base of their skulls for meningitis and which can cause side effects such as nausea, fever, and kidney damage; and

WHEREAS, Within California alone, Valley Fever is found in portions of the Sacramento Valley, all of the San Joaquin Valley, desert regions, and portions of southern California; and

WHEREAS, California does not have an official statewide method of tracking the rate of Valley Fever infections; and

WHEREAS, In the last 10 years, infection rates in California and Arizona have risen 400 percent, from an estimated 31 cases for every 100,000 people in 1999 to 157 cases for every 100,000 people in 2011; and

WHEREAS, In Kern County, the rate of infection of Valley Fever more than tripled from 2009, for a total of 2,051 cases in 2010 and 2,734 cases in 2011; and

WHEREAS, San Joaquin County Public Health Services recorded 27 cases of Valley Fever in 2009, 46 cases in 2010, and 123 cases in 2011; and

WHEREAS, Valley Fever infection rates rose twelvefold nationwide from 1995 to 2009, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and researchers estimate that the fungus infects more than 150,000 people each year who either suffer serious ailments without knowing the cause of their illness or escape detection of the disease; and

WHEREAS, Misdiagnosis of Valley Fever is so pervasive that experts say that some people suffer and even die from Valley Fever without knowing they ever had the disease; and

WHEREAS, The Governor declared a Drought State of Emergency on January 17, 2014, and California is experiencing record dry conditions, with 2014 projected to become the driest year on record; and

WHEREAS, Dry conditions and lack of precipitation present urgent problems regarding Valley Fever; and

WHEREAS, Valley Fever is usually found in soil two to eight inches from the surface and the extreme dry conditions caused by drought increase the chances of coccidioidomycosis airborne fungi exposure; and

WHEREAS, Central Valley prison inmates are being infected by Valley Fever at epidemic rates, contributing significantly to the state's prison health care costs; and

WHEREAS, The rapid spread of Valley Fever at state prisons in the Central Valley has resulted in multiple prison inmate deaths and prompted calls to close certain affected prisons, further exacerbating efforts to comply with federal orders to reduce prison overcrowding; and

WHEREAS, Valley Fever kills between 100 to 200 more Americans every year than tuberculosis; and

WHEREAS, Valley Fever most seriously affects the young, the elderly, those with lowered immune systems, and those of African American and Filipino descent; and

WHEREAS, Valley Fever is a disease that has been studied for the past 100 years but still remains impossible to control and difficult to treat; and

WHEREAS, There is no known cure for Valley Fever, but researchers are closer than ever to finding a much-needed vaccine against this devastating disease; and

WHEREAS, The research effort to find a vaccine for Valley Fever and a funding partnership including the State of California were approved by the Legislature and signed by Governor Wilson in 1997; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature does hereby proclaim August 2014 as Valley Fever Awareness Month; and be it further

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