

Senate Joint Resolution No. 21

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 32

Senate Joint Resolution No. 21—Relative to the Armenian Genocide.

[Filed with Secretary of State May 12, 2014.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 21, De León. Armenian Genocide.

This measure would designate and encourage the people of California to commemorate the month of April 2014, as “California Month of Remembrance for the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923,” and would call upon the Congress and the President of the United States to act likewise and to formally and consistently recognize and reaffirm the historical truth that the atrocities committed against the Armenian people constituted genocide. The measure would commend conscientious educators who teach about human rights and genocide. The measure would call upon the President to work toward equitable, constructive, stable, and durable Armenian-Turkish relations and a fair, just, and comprehensive international resolution of this crime against humanity, and would call upon the Republic of Turkey to acknowledge the facts of the Armenian Genocide and to work toward a just resolution.

WHEREAS, During the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923 1.5 million men, women, and children of Armenian descent lost their lives at the hands of the Ottoman Turkish Empire in its attempt to systematically eliminate the Armenian race; and

WHEREAS, Despite Armenians’ historic presence, stewardship, and autonomy in the region, Turkish rulers of the Ottoman Empire subjected Armenians to severe and unjust persecution and brutality including, but not limited to, widespread and wholesale massacres beginning in the 1890s, most notably the Hamidian Massacres from 1894 to 1896 and the Adana Massacre of 1909; and

WHEREAS, The earlier massacres and subsequent genocide of the Armenians constitute one of the most atrocious violations of human rights in the history of the world; and

WHEREAS, Adolph Hitler, in persuading his army commanders that the merciless persecution and killing of Jews, Poles, and other people would bring no retribution, declared, “Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?”; and

WHEREAS, Unlike other people and governments that have admitted and denounced the abuses and crimes of predecessor regimes, and despite the overwhelming proof of genocidal intent, the Republic of Turkey has inexplicably and adamantly denied the occurrence of the crimes against

humanity committed by the Ottoman and Young Turk rulers. Those denials compound the grief of the few remaining survivors of the atrocities, desecrate the memory of the victims, and cause continuing pain to the descendants of the victims; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of Turkey has escalated its international campaign of Armenian Genocide denial, maintained its blockade of Armenia and increased its pressure on the small but growing movement in Turkey acknowledging the Armenian Genocide and seeking justice for this systematic campaign of destruction of millions of Armenians, Greeks, Assyrians, Pontians, Syrians, and other Christians upon their biblical-era homelands; and

WHEREAS, Those citizens of Turkey, both Armenian and non-Armenian, who continue to speak the truth about the Armenian Genocide, such as human rights activist and journalist Hrant Dink, continue to be silenced by violent means; and

WHEREAS, The accelerated level and scope of denial and revisionism, coupled with the passage of time and the fact that very few survivors remain who can serve as reminders of the indescribable brutality and the lives that were tormented, compel a sense of urgency in efforts to solidify recognition of historical truth; and

WHEREAS, The United States is on record as having officially recognized the Armenian Genocide in the United States government's May 28, 1951, written statement to the International Court of Justice regarding the Reservations to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, through President Ronald Reagan's April 22, 1981, Proclamation No. 4838, and by Congressional legislation including House Joint Resolution 148 adopted on April 8, 1975, and House Joint Resolution 247 adopted on September 10, 1984; and

WHEREAS, Even prior to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the United States has a record of having sought to justly and constructively address the consequences of the Ottoman Empire's intentional destruction of the Armenian people, including through Senate Concurrent Resolution 12 adopted on February 9, 1916, Senate Resolution 359 adopted on May 11, 1920, and President Woodrow Wilson's November 22, 1920, decision entitled, The Frontier between Armenia and Turkey; and

WHEREAS, By consistently remembering and forcefully condemning the atrocities committed against the Armenians, and honoring the survivors as well as other victims of similar heinous conduct, we guard against repetition of such acts of genocide and provide the American public with a greater understanding of history; and

WHEREAS, This measure would declare that the Legislature deplors the persistent, ongoing efforts by any person, in this country or abroad, to deny the historical fact of the Armenian Genocide; and

WHEREAS, California is home to the largest Armenian-American population in the United States, and Armenians living in California have

enriched our state through their leadership and contribution in business, agriculture, academia, government, and the arts; and

WHEREAS, The State of California has been at the forefront of encouraging and promoting a curriculum relating to human rights and genocide in order to empower future generations to prevent the recurrence of genocide; and

WHEREAS, On April 24, 2013, the President of the United States stated, “A full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the facts is in all of our interests. Nations grow stronger by acknowledging and reckoning with painful elements of the past, thereby building a foundation for a more just and tolerant future”; and

WHEREAS, President Obama entered office having stated his “firmly held conviction that the Armenian Genocide is not an allegation, a personal opinion, or a point of view, but rather a widely documented fact supported by an overwhelming body of historical evidence” and affirmed his record of “calling for Turkey’s acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide”; and

WHEREAS, The United States’ national interests in establishing equitable, constructive, stable, and durable relations between Armenians and Turks cannot be meaningfully advanced by circumventing or otherwise seeking to avoid the central political, legal, security, and moral issue between these two nations: Turkey’s denial of truth and justice for the Armenian Genocide; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature hereby designates the month of April 2014, as “California Month of Remembrance for the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923”; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature commends its conscientious educators who teach about human rights and genocide; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature respectfully calls upon the Congress and the President of the United States to act likewise and to formally and consistently recognize and reaffirm the historical truth that the atrocities committed against the Armenian people constituted genocide; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature calls on the President to work toward equitable, constructive, stable, and durable Armenian-Turkish relations based upon the Republic of Turkey’s full acknowledgment of the facts and ongoing consequences of the Armenian Genocide, and a fair, just, and comprehensive international resolution of this crime against humanity; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature calls upon the Republic of Turkey to acknowledge the facts of the Armenian Genocide and to work toward a just resolution; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the Majority Leader of the Senate, to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress

of the United States, the Governor, and the Turkish Ambassador to the United States.

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