

Date of Hearing: July 10, 2017

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Jim Frazier, Chair

SCR 25 (Portantino) – As Amended March 27, 2017

SENATE VOTE: 39-0

SUBJECT: State highways: Pasadena Armenian Genocide Memorial

SUMMARY: Requests that the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) erect informational signs at the Fair Oaks Avenue Exit off Interstate 210 (I-210) in the City of Pasadena, directing motorists to the Pasadena Armenian Genocide Memorial (Memorial). Specifically, **this resolution:**

- 1) Recounts the experience of the Armenian people living in the Ottoman Empire and the 1,500,000 Armenians who lost their lives from 1915-1921.
- 2) Describes the Memorial.
- 3) Requests that Caltrans erect informational signs at the Fair Oaks Avenue exit off I-210 in the City of Pasadena, directing motorists to the Memorial.
- 4) Requires that Caltrans ensure the signs are consistent with the signing requirements for the state highway system.
- 5) Requires that Caltrans erect those signs upon receiving donations from non-state sources.

EXISTING LAW: Assigns Caltrans the responsibility to operate and maintain state highways. This responsibility includes the installation and maintenance of highway signs.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown, but the resolution requests that Caltrans only erect the appropriate signage upon receiving donations from non-state sources covering the cost.

COMMENTS: The Pasadena Armenian Genocide Memorial, located in the northeast corner of Memorial Park in Pasadena, was unveiled in April, 2015. The Memorial was erected to honor the martyrs of the Armenian Genocide as well as all victims of crimes against humanity and to serve as a site of religious and cultural commemoration by the Armenian community in southern California.

Because southern California is home to the largest Armenian community outside of Armenia, with more than 200,000 people of Armenian descent living in the Los Angeles county area, the author introduced this resolution to direct Caltrans to install freeway signage, on I-210 at the Fair Oaks Avenue exit to, direct motorists to the Memorial. According to the author, in addition to providing direction, the signage will also help raise awareness about the Armenian Genocide and serve as a reminder that fighting crimes against humanity is an ongoing process that requires continuous attention.

The placement of destination signs on state highways is the responsibility of Caltrans. Caltrans recognizes that these signs offer helpful information to motorists, but a proliferation of non-

essential signs can divert driver attention from more important messages, such as speed limits, exit ramp locations, and dangerous condition warnings. In the interest of striking a reasonable balance between these competing interests, Caltrans voluntarily subscribes to sign placement standards that are generally used by all highway agencies across the nation.

The national standards allow for destination signs that announce the presence of facilities that attract large numbers of visitors such as stadiums, convention centers, universities, airports, and museums. In order to qualify for a sign, Caltrans requires applicants to meet minimum criteria, including average annual attendance. While there is no standard that specifically refers to the type of facility referenced in this resolution, the standard for museums calls for an annual attendance of one million people and the standard for fairgrounds calls for an annual attendance of 500,000. At this time, the annual attendance at Memorial is unclear, but it is unlikely that it will not meet the minimum attendance criteria.

Committee concerns: While the destination signage requested in this bill will help direct visitors to the Memorial as well as raise awareness regarding the Armenian Genocide, specifically, and fighting crimes against humanity in general, erecting this signage, despite the fact that the Memorial is unlikely to meet the minimum attendance criteria, could spark similar requests for signage that fails to meet the attendance criteria resulting in a proliferation of highway signage and increased motorist distraction.

Previous legislation: ACR 148 (Calderon), Resolution Chapter 10, Statutes of 2010, requested Caltrans to erect information signs on State Route 60 in the County of Los Angeles directing motorists to the Armenian Genocide Martyrs Monument.

SCR 3 (Cedillo), Resolution Chapter 102, Statutes of 2007, which was identical to SCR 112 (Cedillo) of 2006, requested the installation of directional signs for The Wall Las Memorias Project AIDS monument on State Route 5.

SCR 112 (Cedillo) of 2006, which requested the installation on of directional signs on State Route 5 for The Wall Las Memorias Project AIDS, passed from the Senate 35-2, but was not taken up by the Assembly due to the lateness of the legislative session.

AB 2334 (Strickland) of 2006, would have required Caltrans to post signs on State Route 101, directing motorists to the World War II Aviation Museum in Camarillo. AB 2334 was vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger on the grounds that the sign did not meet established criteria for highway signage.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Armenian Cultural Society
Armenian Educational and Cultural Society
Armenian Relief Society, Pasadena "Sosse" Chapter
Homenetmen Pasadena "Azadamard" Chapter
Pasadena Armenian Genocide Memorial Committee
Pasadena Armenian Youth Federation Juniors
St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church

Opposition

None on file

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