

Date of Hearing: April 18, 2016

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Jim Frazier, Chair

ACR 157 (Hadley) – As Amended April 13, 2016

**SUBJECT:** Louis Zamperini Memorial Highway

**SUMMARY:** Designates a specified portion of Interstate 405 in the County of Los Angeles as the “Louis Zamperini Memorial Highway.” Specifically, **this resolution:**

- 1) Recounts the life and service of Louis Silvie Zamperini.
- 2) Designates that portion of Interstate 405 from Redondo Beach Boulevard to South Western Avenue in the County of Los Angeles as the “Louis Zamperini Memorial Highway.”
- 3) Requests that the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) determine the costs of erecting appropriate signs consistent with the signing requirements for the state highway system, showing the special designation, and upon receiving donations from non-state sources covering the cost, to erect those signs.

**EXISTING LAW:** Assigns Caltrans the responsibility of operating and maintaining state highways including the installation and maintenance of highway signs.

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

**COMMENTS:** The author seeks to honor the life and service of Louis Silvie Zamperini, whose story has been recounted in the 2010 biography, *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption* by Laura Hillenbrand and in the 2014 film *Unbroken*. Specially, Mr. Zamperini was born in 1917 in New York. He joined the track team in high school and set the national high school record in the mile at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in 1934, earning him the nickname of the “Torrance Tornado.” He earned a scholarship to the University of Southern California.

Two years later, in the 5,000-meter Olympic trials at Randalls Island in New York, Zamperini finished in a dead heat with Don Lash, the world-record holder, which qualified him for the 1936 Olympics in Berlin as a teenager. In 1938, Zamperini set a national collegiate mile record of 4:08.3, which stood for 15 years. He subsequently graduated from the University of Southern California, then when World War II broke out, he enlisted in 1941 in the United States Army Air Corps and became a bombardier on a Consolidated B-24 bomber in the Pacific theater of operations.

During a search and rescue mission to save a downed pilot, Zamperini’s airplane crashed due to mechanical failure, and he and two other airmen were the only survivors of the 11-man crew on board the airplane. One of the men died after 33 days, and Louis Zamperini and the other airman were stranded on a raft for a total of 47 days before washing ashore on a Pacific island and being taken as prisoners of war (POWs) by the Japanese. Zamperini was tortured for the next two years and was only released and returned to the United States after the end of the war in the Pacific in 1945.

After the war, he founded a camp for troubled youths called the Victory Boys Camp. In 1949, Zamperini recommitted his life to Christ, and forgave his Japanese tormentors. Zamperini passed away on July 2, 2014, at his home in Los Angeles, at 97 years of age.

Louis Zamperini was a defiant, resourceful, and determined man. He became an Olympic athlete and survived a plane crash, being lost at sea, and the worst of a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp during World War II. In 1998, he carried the Olympic torch at the Winter Olympics held in Nagano, Japan. Mr. Zamperini also spent the last 65 years of his life sharing his faith and his philosophy of life with as many audiences as would invite him to speak. According to the author, Louis Zamperini is an outstanding role model for young Californians. Further, he states that, throughout his life, Zamperini held himself to incredibly high standards, and overcame and achieved an incredible amount in his 97 years and left a legacy for others to aspire to.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:****Support**

Torrance Area Chamber of Commerce

**Opposition**

None on file

**Analysis Prepared by:** Melissa White / TRANS. / (916) 319-2093