

Date of Hearing: June 29, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Lori D. Wilson, Chair

SCR 129 (Cortese) – As Amended March 25, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 37-0

SUBJECT: Rusty Areias Highway

SUMMARY: Designates a specified portion of State Highway Route 152 in the County of Santa Clara as the Rusty Areias Highway and requests that the California Department of Transportation determine the cost of appropriate signs showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources sufficient to cover 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 determine the cost of appropriate signage consistent with requirements for the state highway system and only erect the appropriate signage upon receiving donations from non-state sources covering the cost.

COMMENTS: According to the author, “Rusty Areias is a dedicated public servant who has made a lasting impact on my district, and on our state. As an Assemblymember who served the 25th and 28th districts for 12 years, Rusty had over 100 pieces of legislation signed into law under two Republican Governors. He secured critical funds for numerous key projects, including Martial Cottle Park, a one-of-a-kind agricultural park surrounded by urban development in Santa Clara County. Rusty also helped obtain \$150 million for key improvements to Highway 152 that made the road from the South Bay to the San Joaquin Valley safer and more accessible for all Californians. That legacy, coupled with his time as Director of Parks and Recreation under Governor Jerry Brown, where he expanded the number of visitors to our state parks by 23 million people, is what makes Rusty so deserving of recognition. SCR 129 will designate a portion of Highway 152 as the “Rusty Areias Highway” in his honor.”

Rusty Areias was born on September 12, 1949, in Los Banos, California. He graduated from California State University, Chico, in 1973 and subsequently completed Executive Leadership Programs at the Harvard Kennedy School.

Mr. Areias dedicated 12 years to the California State Assembly, representing the 25th and 28th Districts from 1982 to 1994. During this tenure, he chaired several key committees, including the Committees on Agriculture, Consumer Protection, and Earthquakes, Repair, and Response. His legislative priorities focused on strengthening the agricultural economy, preserving farmland, enhancing seismic safety standards, reducing credit card interest rates, and advancing consumer rights.

Mr. Areias was noted for his ability to facilitate bipartisan consensus, authoring over 100 pieces of legislation signed into law by two different Republican governors. His work on the Assembly Committee on Transportation was particularly impactful, spearheading efforts to secure \$150 million for improvements to State Highway Route 152 over the Pacheco Pass. This enhancement

was critical in connecting the San Joaquin Valley to the southern San Francisco Bay, providing essential transportation services for the region.

Following his legislative service, Mr. Areias served as the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation from 1998 to 2001. His tenure was marked by a substantial reduction in park fees, which increased state park attendance by approximately 23 million visitors, and the oversight of major park bonds totaling over \$6 billion. During this time, he played a critical role in the acquisition of land for Martial Cottle Park in Santa Clara County, resulting in a 300-acre, \$500 million farmland donation in 1999 to be preserved as public parkland.

Mr. Areias further contributed to California's environmental policy as a member, and two-year chair, of the California Coastal Commission, where he focused on balanced solutions to complex coastal policy challenges.

Beyond his public service, Mr. Areias has managed Areias Dairy Farms, achieving recognition as one of the Outstanding Farmers of America. He maintains an ongoing commitment to civic life through service on the boards of the Children's Law Center of California and the Public Policy Institute of California. Since 1997, he and his wife, Julie, have co-owned and restored the historical Bird Ranch at San Luis Creek. He is a father of two children.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Congressman John Garamendi, 8th District
Will Kempton, Sacramento Transportation Authority
Willie L. Brown, Jr. Former Speaker, California State Assembly

Opposition

One Individual

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