

Date of Hearing: April 25, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Laura Friedman, Chair
ACR 126 (Cunningham) – As Introduced January 26, 2022

SUBJECT: Katcho Achadjian Memorial Highway

SUMMARY: Designates the portion of Unites States Route 101 in the County of San Luis Obispo, from postmile 13.173 to postmile 19.812, as the Katcho Achadjian Memorial Highway.

EXISTING LAW: Assigns the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) the responsibility of operating and maintaining state highways. This includes 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: On March 5, 2020, California lost one of its most regarded and renowned public officials ever to serve its people, the Honorable Katcho Achadjian, former Member of the California State Assembly, whose good deeds earned him the respect and admiration of his family, friends, and colleagues and the countless individuals whose lives he touched.

Distinguishing himself in life in various capacities, including as a business owner, legislator, community volunteer, and devoted family man, Katcho Achadjian was born to Armenian parents in Jalala, Lebanon, in 1951 and immigrated to the United States in 1971 to continue his education.

After settling in California's central coast, Katcho Achadjian attended Cuesta Community College before transferring to California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, where he received his degree in business administration and later shared his experience and expertise teaching political science classes.

A pillar in the City of Arroyo Grande's business community, Katcho Achadjian opened his first business, a Shell Gas Station on Grand Avenue, in 1978 and went on to operate three gas stations.

After obtaining his United States citizenship on December 17, 1982, Katcho Achadjian married his beloved wife, Araxie, two years later and was blessed with two adorable children, Hratch and Nyri, both of whom were taught the strong work ethic that had been instilled in him in his youth.

In 1998, Katcho Achadjian was elected to the County of San Luis Obispo's Board of Supervisors, where he served as chair of the board in 2001 and 2006 and contributed to the passage of the county's budget, balanced and on time for 12 consecutive years, during his three terms on the board.

In 2010, Katcho Achadjian made the jump to state government when he was elected to represent the 33rd Assembly District, later redrawn as the 35th Assembly District, in the California State Legislature.

While holding state office, Katcho Achadjian served on the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, the Committee on Banking and Finance, and the Committee on Jobs, Economic Development, and the Economy in the Assembly, where his dedicated and diligent service helped shape some of the most important laws enacted in California.

During his tenure, Katcho Achadjian authored several bills, including Assembly Bill 65 in 2013 (Chapter 259 of the Statutes of 2013), which closed a loophole in the state's definition of rape. As the descendent of genocide survivors, Achadjian was the principal co-author of the Armenian Genocide Education Act, which requires every school district in California to include the Armenian Genocide in its curriculum for grades seven through 12.

A true public servant renowned for his superb ability to broker compromises with diverse groups of people in order to forge solutions to the challenges that faced the community, Katcho Achadjian was a long-time supporter of civic, nonprofit, and service organizations, coastal ranching and farming, and protecting the California coastline.

Katcho Achadjian was a charter member of the San Luis Obispo Law Enforcement Assistance Foundation's Board of Directors, served on the County of San Luis Obispo's Sheriff's Advisory Council, served on the Board of Directors of the Arroyo Grande Community Hospital, and provided leadership as chair of the County of San Luis Obispo's First 5 Commission and the French Hospital Medical Center.

The high esteem in which Katcho Achadjian was held by his loving family, his numerous friends and colleagues, and those fortunate enough to have known him stands as a testament for others who strive for the best in every aspect of their life.

Katcho Achadjian memory will live forever in the hearts and minds of his beloved wife, Araxie, his adorable children, Hratch and Nyri, and a host of other family members and many longtime friends.

According to the author, "Katcho was my friend and mentor. He was an American success story and a true public servant who always put the Central Coast first. His legacy of energetic representation, consensus-building, and public service is a model for all that seek elected office. While he will always be missed by the Central Coast community, the renaming of this segment of Highway 101 ensures that he will never be forgotten."

In support, the County of San Luis Obispo writes, "Katcho served the residents of this county for 12 years as the District 4 Supervisor and then in the California State Assembly for six years representing San Luis Obispo and Northern Santa Barbara counties. Katcho was a consensus-builder who was able to bring diverse groups together to work for solutions for the good of the community."

Committee Comments: It is the intent of the Assembly Transportation Committee to use the Memorial Highway Naming process to honor deceased Californians who have made significant public service contributions and also to reflect the diversity of our state. Currently, most named highways in California are for fallen male public safety officers, who made the ultimate sacrifice, and for whom we are indebted. However, these names do not fully represent the wide range of types of public service contributions, as well as the gender and racial diversity of California's communities. The Assembly Transportation Committee is committed to working with the

Department of Transportation in the upcoming year to improve the naming process to ensure greater equity and to better represent the diversity of California.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

County of San Luis Obispo

Opposition

None in opposition

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