

Date of Hearing: April 25, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Laura Friedman, Chair

ACR 162 (Nguyen) – As Introduced March 16, 2022

SUBJECT: Officer Nicholas Vella Memorial Highway

SUMMARY: Designate the portion of State Highway Route 39 between the junction with State Highway Route 1 at post marker 0.000 and Talbert Avenue at post marker 3.611 in the City of Huntington Beach as the Officer Nicholas Vella 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: Born in Whittier, Nicholas Vella excelled at football and basketball before graduating St. Margaret's Episcopal School in San Juan Capistrano.

He went on to be a lifeguard and also taught swimming. Many recall his time was spent helping others. Whether it was working with children at the pool or feeding friends and families during festivities, he was wanted to do more for others.

Vella joined the Laguna Beach Police Department in December 2003, but his ultimate goal was to fly helicopters which led him to the Huntington Beach Police Department in April 2008. Officer Vella was an 18 year law enforcement veteran with 14 years on the force in Huntington Beach.

Vella, 44, leaves behind his wife, Kristi, and teenage daughter, Dylan.

According to the author, “On the night of February 19th, 2022, Huntington Beach Police Officer Nicholas Vella, 44, sadly lost his life when his patrol helicopter suddenly plunged into Newport Harbor. Law enforcement officers and professionals have selflessly taken on the inherent dangers and hazards associated with this career and this is demonstrated by the tragic death of Officer Nicholas Vella, a 14 year veteran of the Huntington Beach Police Department.”

“Officer Vella will be honored for his service to the community and dedication to his fellow officers and his Department. He will be remembered as husband, father and family man.”

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**

Huntington Police Officers Association
Huntington Beach Police Department

Opposition

None on file.

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