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Assembly California Legislature

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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2021-22 SESSION

Committee Policy on: RESOLUTIONS NAMING HIGHWAY OR STRUCTURES

Policy: Resolutions proposing to name or designate state highways or highway structures should meet the following criteria:

- 1) The person being honored must have provided extraordinary public service or some exemplary contribution to the public good and have a connection to the community where the highway is located.
- 2) The person being honored must be deceased.
- 3) The naming must be done without cost to the state. Costs for signs and plaques must be paid by local or private sources.
- 4) The author or co-author of the measure must represent the district in which the facility is located, and the measure must identify the specific highway segment or structure being named.
- 5) A segment of highway being named for a specific individual or individuals must not exceed five miles in length.
- 6) The proposed designation must reflect a community consensus and be without local opposition.
- 7) The proposed designation may not supersede an existing designation unless the sponsor can document that a good-faith effort has uncovered no opposition to rescinding the prior designation.
- 8) The author's office has contacted the Caltrans Legislative Affairs office at (916) 654-2397 to ensure that the highway segment and/or structure meet the requirements.

Discussion: Each legislative session members of the Senate and Assembly introduce resolutions proposing to name state highway segments or structures in honor of some individual, group or historical event. Over the years, an informal policy developed relative to the criteria for approval of such designations and memorials. No firm

legislative guidelines existed until 2004, however, which in some instances resulted in inconsistency or controversy over a proposed designation.

The establishment of basic guidelines for naming highways and structures serves to mitigate questions or controversy in advance of legislative consideration of naming resolutions. It also serves the Committee's efficient consideration of such proposals and promotes fairness in determining whether a particular facility or segment is to be specially designated.

In 2020, the California Natural Resources Secretary Wade Crowfoot, State Parks Director Armando Quintero and Department of Transportation Director Toks Omishakin announced a series of actions to identify and redress discriminatory names of features attached to the State Parks and transportation systems. Agencies also will expand representation and increase transparency around a state committee tasked with recommending changes to geographic names in California. The moves come in the wake of a national conversation about the names of geographic features, markers and statues affiliated with the Civil War, genocide of Native Americans and other remnants of institutionalized discrimination. Consistent with these efforts, the Assembly Transportation Highway Naming guidelines encourage the introduction of resolutions that are sensitive to and promote racial and gender equity. For example, most of the highways currently are named for men which is not representative of the population distribution in California.