

Date of Hearing: June 27, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Laura Friedman, Chair
SCR 68 (Archuleta) – As Amended April 18, 2022

SENATE VOTE: 37-0

SUBJECT: First Lady Pat Nixon Memorial Highway

SUMMARY: SCR 68 would designate the portion of State Route 91, from Pioneer Blvd UC53-1335 (Postmile R18.087) to the Carmenita Rd OC 53-1432 (Postmile R20.454), as the First Lady Pat Nixon 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 16, 1912, in Ely, Nevada, First Lady Pat Nixon was born Thelma Catherine Ryan. She was given the nickname Patricia, or “Pat” by her father because she was born just hours shy of Saint Patrick’s Day. Mrs. Nixon attended Pioneer Boulevard Grammar School in the City of Artesia (now the City of Cerritos), California and Excelsior High School in the City of Norwalk, California.

Mrs. Nixon graduated from the University of Southern California in 1937, becoming the first Presidential First Lady to earn a graduate degree, and subsequently began teaching at Whittier Union High School in the City of Whittier, California. Pat met Richard Nixon in February 1938 and they married two years later in the City of Riverside, California. The couple had two daughters, Patricia and Julie Nixon.

Throughout her lifetime of service, Mrs. Nixon fundamentally transformed the roles of both Second Lady and First Lady, redefining them for an entire generation of people who would follow her. In 1953, then Second Lady Pat Nixon, as wife of the Vice President of the United States, led an extensive two-month tour through Asia and the Pacific, including visiting Cambodia, Korea, Vietnam, and Japan. On January 20, 1969, Pat Nixon became the First Lady of the United States of America. Mrs. Nixon championed and supported the societal advancement of women and girls by endorsing the Equal Rights Amendment, becoming the first Presidential First Lady to wear pants in public, and advocating for the appointment of a woman to the United States Supreme Court. Mrs. Nixon championed volunteer service and donated personal time and efforts to furthering the charitable missions of such notable volunteer organizations as The Salvation Army, the Girl Scouts of the United States of America, and the American Red Cross.

In July 1969, Mrs. Nixon visited American troops in South Vietnam, becoming the first Presidential First Lady to travel to a combat zone. Pat Nixon’s travels as First Lady included the historic visit to the People’s Republic of China, summit meetings in the former Soviet Union,

and diplomatic missions to Ghana, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire, as well as a journey of compassion to take relief supplies to earthquake victims in Peru. Mrs. Nixon became known as "America's Ambassador of Goodwill" for her travels to 83 different countries around the world, the most of any First Lady.

According to the author, "Thelma Catherine "Pat" Nixon is remembered as an avid supporter of charitable causes and volunteerism, both in California and at a Federal level during her time in the White House as First Lady. We are hopeful this resolution will help raise awareness of Pat Nixon's ties to the region, ranging from her upbringing in the cities of Artesia and Cerritos, to her professional beginnings as a teacher at Whittier Union High School.

We would like to designate a portion of State Route 91 as the First Lady Pat Nixon Memorial Highway for the purpose of recognizing her connection to the region."

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

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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