Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 144

Introduced by Assembly Member Blumenfield
(Coauthors: Assembly Members Anderson, Feuer, and Ruskin)

March 10, 2010

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 144—Relative to Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 144, as introduced, Blumenfield. Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month.

This measure would proclaim the month of April of each year as Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month.

Fiscal committee: no.

WHEREAS, During the Second World War, Raphael Lemkin, a Polish lawyer of Jewish descent, coined the term “genocide” to describe a coordinated plan of actions aimed at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating a group itself, for example, by disintegrating a group’s political and social institutions, culture, language, national feelings, religion, and economic existence, and destroying the personal security, liberty, health, and dignity, and the lives of individuals belonging to the group; and

WHEREAS, Following the Holocaust, on December 9, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 260 (III) A, the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, declaring genocide to be a crime under international law, and defining genocide to include
the commission of certain acts, including killing members of the
group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the
group, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring
about a group’s physical destruction in whole or in part, imposing
measures intended to prevent births within the group, and forcibly
transferring children of the group to another group, with the intent
to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious
group; and
WHEREAS, Existing laws recognize certain genocides,
including the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust, and various
other genocides have been conducted throughout history, including
those in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Darfur, and in other parts of
the world; and
WHEREAS, Many genocidal acts throughout history have
occurred during the month of April. In April 1915, the Turkish
government began rounding up leading Armenian religious,
political, and intellectual leaders in the capital of Istanbul and
murdering them. This pattern was copied across the country,
leading to the deaths of more than one million Armenians with the
relocation of survivors to the Syrian desert. In April 1933, the
Nazis issued a decree preparing the way for the “Final Solution,”
in which they defined non-Aryans as “anyone descended from
non-Aryan, especially Jewish, parents or grandparents. One parent
or grandparent classifies the descendant as non-Aryan ... especially
if one parent or grandparent was of the Jewish faith.” In April
1975, the Khmer Rouge entered the Cambodian capital, Phnom
Penh, and initiated massacres that emptied entire cities into “killing
fields,” leading to the death of some two million people. In April
1992, the siege of Sarajevo began, leading to the deaths of more
than 2,000 Bosnian Serbs. In April 2004, the Rwandan President’s
airplane was shot down, leading to the killing of moderate leaders
by Hutu hardliners, and in the next three months 800,000 Tutsis
were slaughtered. In April 2003, the displacement of Darfurians
began in Sudan, leading to hundreds of thousands of deaths and
the displacement of millions; and
WHEREAS, In 2008, the Prevention of Genocide Task Force,
convened by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the
American Academy of Diplomacy, and the United States Institute
of Peace, issued a report finding that in order to prevent future
genocides and mass atrocities, effective prevention measures must
be implemented before a crisis has erupted, and that educating the
public can help to protect individual rights and promote a culture
of lawfulness that will help prevent future genocides; and
WHEREAS, The State of California condemns, and desires to
combat, all acts of genocide; and
WHEREAS, Educating the public about the evils of genocide
and commemorating victims of genocide, including the adoption
of a Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month, are effective
tools that will further these goals; now, therefore, be it
Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate
thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby proclaims the
month of April of each year as Genocide Awareness and Prevention
Month; and be it further
Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.