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ACR-41 Sunshine Week. (2015-2016)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 41

CHAPTER 17

Relative to Sunshine Week.

[Filed with Secretary of State April 07, 2015.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 41, Ting. Sunshine Week.

This measure would designate March 15, 2015, through March 21, 2015, as Sunshine Week.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, California has a long tradition in support of open government and access to government records; and

WHEREAS, In 1953, California enacted the Ralph M. Brown Act guaranteeing the public's right to attend and participate in local governing bodies; and

WHEREAS, In 1967, the Bagley-Keene Open Meeting Act was adopted to mandate open meetings of state agencies, boards, and commissions; and

WHEREAS, In 1968, California enacted the California Public Records Act that expressly declared that "access to information concerning the conduct of the people's business is a fundamental and necessary right of every person in this state"; and

WHEREAS, California voters approved Proposition 59, a state constitutional amendment, also known as the "Sunshine Amendment," in 2004 that furthers open government protections and the rights of voters; and

WHEREAS, California voters approved Proposition 42, a state constitutional amendment, in 2014 to affirm the people's mandate for open government; and

WHEREAS, California entrepreneurs created the information technology revolution and are creating opportunities for government to use technology to improve performance, transparency, and trust; and

WHEREAS, Open government reforms continue to spread across the country, including the adoption of open data policies to urge innovation and economic development through the use of high-value government data that can be freely accessed, modified, and shared; and

WHEREAS, President Barack Obama issued an Open Government Directive to all federal departments and agencies that required the federal government to take steps towards a more open government including publishing government information online with the presumption of openness, to improve the quality of government information, and to institutionalize a culture of open government within departments and agencies; and

WHEREAS, The state of California was one of the first states to launch an open data repository (data.ca.gov), designed to provide a single source of raw data in the state; and

WHEREAS, State agencies, including the California Health and Human Services Agency and the State Controller's office, have shown leadership in creating portals that showcase government data in an interactive and searchable format that enhances its value and utility; and

WHEREAS, Many local governments have been leaders in open records and public meetings and the Cities of San Francisco, Sacramento, San Diego, Oakland, West Sacramento, and Los Angeles and the Counties of Los Angeles and San Mateo have adopted Open Data policies; and

WHEREAS, Numerous California cities have named Chief Data Officers, and local government agencies have launched Open Data portals; and

WHEREAS, With an inaugural grant from the Knight Foundation, the American Society of News Editors launched Sunshine Week in March 2005, and it continues to be celebrated each year in mid-March to coincide with National Freedom of Information Day and President James Madison's birthday on March 16; and

WHEREAS, Sunshine Week is now a national initiative to promote a dialogue about the importance of open government and freedom of information. Participants include news media, civic groups, libraries, nonprofit entities, schools, and others interested in the public's right to know; and

WHEREAS, The coverage, commentaries, and activities promoting open government during Sunshine Week have led to tangible, meaningful changes to people's lives, and the laws that govern them; and

WHEREAS, Sunshine Week is increasing public awareness and people are playing more of a role in the actions that affect their communities. People are learning what kinds of information they have a right to see, how and where to obtain that information, and what to do if someone tries to prevent them from accessing it; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That Sunshine Week is a celebration of the public's commitment to openness and an exploration of what open government means in a technology-enhanced future; and be it further

Resolved, That the Legislature hereby designates March 15, 2015, through March 21, 2015, as Sunshine Week and encourages all Californians to participate in appropriate activities relating to open government and access to public information; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.