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ACR-174 Buffalo Soldiers Memorial Highway. (2015-2016)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 174

CHAPTER 134

Relative to the Buffalo Soldiers Memorial Highway.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 23, 2016.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 174, Bigelow. Buffalo Soldiers Memorial Highway.

This measure would designate a specified portion of State Highway Route 41 from the Mariposa-Madera county line to the entrance of Yosemite National Park as the Buffalo Soldiers Memorial Highway. The measure would also request the Department of Transportation to determine the cost of appropriate signs showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources covering the cost, to erect those signs.

Fiscal Committee: yes

WHEREAS, In 1866, the United States Congress created six segregated regiments that were ultimately consolidated into four African American regiments: the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry; and

WHEREAS, African American army regiments that had been dispatched westward fought in the Indian Wars and these soldiers were eventually given the name Buffalo Soldiers by the Cheyenne and other Plains Indians; and

WHEREAS, Although historians have recorded the service of these Buffalo Soldiers on the western frontier, their service in some national parks has been nearly forgotten; and

WHEREAS, The United States Army served as the official administrator of Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks between 1891 and 1913. In that capacity, it helped create a model for park management as we know it today; and

WHEREAS, Buffalo Soldiers were among the first park rangers and back country rangers patrolling parts of the west; and

WHEREAS, Approximately 500 Buffalo Soldiers, mainly from the 24th Infantry and 9th Cavalry, served in Yosemite National Park and Sequoia National Park. Their duties ranged from evicting poachers and timber thieves to extinguishing forest fires. They also oversaw the construction of roads, trails, and other infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, Commanding officers of the United States Army became acting military superintendents for these national parks with two troops of cavalry assigned to each park. Each troop was made up of approximately 60 men; and

WHEREAS, The presence of these troops invigorated the local economy and the soldiers acting as official stewards of park lands brought a sense of law and order to the mountain wilderness; and

WHEREAS, Among their many accomplishments, the troops assigned to Yosemite National Park oversaw the building of an arboretum near the south fork of the Merced River in 1904. One scholar considered the area to contain the first marked nature trail in the United States' national park system; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby designates that portion of State Highway Route 41 from post mile 1.841 at the Mariposa-Madera county line to post mile 4.918 at the entrance to Yosemite National Park, as the Buffalo Soldiers Memorial Highway; and be it further

Resolved, That the Department of Transportation is requested to determine the cost of appropriate signs consistent with the signing requirements for the state highway system showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources sufficient to cover that cost, to erect those signs; and be it further

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