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SCR-58 Filipino American History Month. (2015-2016)

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Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 58

CHAPTER 100

Relative to Filipino American History Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 14, 2015.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 58, Pan. Filipino American History Month.

This measure would recognize the month of October 2015 as Filipino American History Month and the 428th anniversary of the first presence of Filipinos in the continental United States.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, Filipinos and Filipino Americans have been contributing to California and the United States for hundreds of years, ever since October 18, 1587, when the first "Luzones Indios" set foot in Morro Bay, California, on board the Nuestra Señora de Esperanza, a Manila-built galleon ship captained by Pedro de Unamuno of Spain; and

WHEREAS, In the late 1700s and early 1800s, Filipinos helped Father Junípero Serra establish the California mission system; and

WHEREAS, Since the late 1800s, Filipino communities have existed in southern Louisiana, according to oral histories recorded by Rhonda Richoux Fox; and

WHEREAS, After the Philippines was colonized, Filipinos began immigrating to San Francisco, where they contributed to the city both as military personnel and as service sector workers such as bellhops, dishwashers, servants, and cooks; established, by the 1920s, a thriving community around Kearny and Jackson Streets, which became known as "Manilatown"; and settled, during the post World War II era, into the Fillmore, South of Market, and Excelsior districts; and

WHEREAS, Between 1906 and 1935, the first large wave of Filipino immigration to the United States began, as Filipinos were recruited to California, Alaska, and Hawaii to work in the agricultural industries, canneries, and sugarcane plantations, respectively; and

WHEREAS, The Filipino contract workers in Hawaii, or "Sakadas," became the largest group of Asians on the sugarcane plantations by the 1920s; and

WHEREAS, At the turn of the 20th century, Filipino students, or "pensionados," farmworkers, and laborers in manufacturing and in the service sector began settling in Stockton and the surrounding San Joaquin Delta area, where they built a community that became the largest concentration of Filipinos outside of the Philippines and established a thriving six-block ethnic neighborhood that became known as "Little Manila"; and

WHEREAS, In 2000, the Stockton City Council designated this area, in downtown Stockton at the intersection of Lafayette and El Dorado Streets, as the "Little Manila Historical Site," the first designation of this kind in the country; and

WHEREAS, In the first decades of the 20th century, thousands of Filipinos in California worked in agricultural fields throughout the state, in cities and regions such as the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, the central coast, Imperial Valley, Orange County, the Inland Empire, Delano, Bakersfield, Coachella Valley, and the San Francisco Bay area, and became a critical element in the growth and political economy of the state, often enduring harsh labor conditions and poor wages, but persevering and creating a strong legacy of mutual support, strikes, and organization for farm labor unionization; and

WHEREAS, In the 1920s, Filipinos in California also worked as laborers in the shipyards of Vallejo, where they established a Filipino American community and business center, and became so successful that there were thousands of Filipinos working as shipbuilders by the start of World War II; and

WHEREAS, During World War II, approximately 200,000 Filipino soldiers battled under the command of the United States to preserve the liberty of our country and win back the liberty of the Philippines from the Japanese occupation; and

WHEREAS, Thousands of these Filipino soldiers came from California, served in the First and Second Filipino Infantry Regiments, underwent training at Salinas and at Fort Ord, California, and were stationed at Camp Beale near Sacramento and Camp Cooke near Santa Maria; and

WHEREAS, After World War II ended, many Filipinos who had served in the United States Navy settled in National City and elsewhere in the County of San Diego, as well as in the Cities of West Long Beach and Wilmington, where they worked in the Long Beach shipyards and Terminal Island canneries, served in the harbor area as nurses and medical workers, and created flourishing Filipino American communities numbering in the tens of thousands; and

WHEREAS, Between 1941 and 1959, the second wave of Filipino immigration to the United States began, as nurses, students, "war brides" and fiancées of World War II military personnel and veterans, tourists, and Filipino members of the United States Navy came to the United States; and

WHEREAS, In 1965, the third wave of Filipino immigration to the United States began, as the passing of the Immigration and Nationality Act abolished "national origins" as the basis for immigration, allowing for more immigration from Asia and Latin America and for much-needed Filipino medical professionals to come to the United States to fill United States labor shortages; and

WHEREAS, On September 8, 1965, Filipino American agricultural labor leaders, including Larry Itliong and Philip Vera Cruz, organized more than 1,500 farmworkers from the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee in the Delano Grape Strike of 1965, in partnership with César Chávez, Dolores Huerta, and other Mexican American labor leaders of the National Farm Workers Association, sparking one of the greatest social, economic, and racial justice movements in the history of California and the United States, and leading to the establishment of the United Farm Workers of America; and

WHEREAS, These agricultural workers, along with other volunteers, also built Agbayani Village, a retirement facility for elderly Filipino farmworkers, or "Manongs," located at Forty Acres in Delano in the County of Kern; and

WHEREAS, In 1968, Filipino student organizers were instrumental in the leadership of the Third World Liberation Front that led to the founding of our nation's first Third World College at the University of California, Berkeley, and the first College of Ethnic Studies, at California State University, San Francisco, which was part of the larger effort to democratize higher education for all; and

WHEREAS, From 1968 to 1977, Filipino American activists and residents of San Francisco's International Hotel organized a popular, multiracial campaign that challenged local authorities and private development to place people and the public good ahead of profit, and support affordable housing for Filipino and Chinese immigrants and community members; and

WHEREAS, From 1972 to 1986, Filipino American activists organized massive educational and political campaigns to restore civil liberties in the Philippines during the period of martial law in that country, creating dynamic local responses to international politics and placing pressure on the United States government to end its support of the Marcos dictatorship; and

WHEREAS, In 1973, the fourth wave of Filipino immigration to the United States began, as political exiles and refugees from the Marcos era, intellectuals, tourists, students, student activists, professionals, semiprofessionals, and families came to the United States; and

WHEREAS, In 2002, the City of Los Angeles, home to over 120,000 Filipinos, designated part of the city as the "Historic Filipinotown" district, the largest designation of this kind in the country; and

WHEREAS, The Filipino Community of Los Angeles Harbor Area, Inc., in the City of Wilmington continues to serve as a model organization, facilitating community events such as weddings, baptisms, pageants, and fiestas; and

WHEREAS, On November 8, 2013, Super Typhoon Haiyan/Yolanda, one of the strongest storms ever recorded in human history, struck the Philippines and devastated the lives of millions of people throughout the Philippines and the world; and

WHEREAS, Today, numerous other community-based institutions that take responsibility for the services, advocacy, and civic engagement needs of the Filipino American community exist throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, The Filipino American population is currently the largest Asian American and Pacific Islander group in California and the third largest Asian American and Pacific Islander group in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Nine Filipino Americans have received the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest award for valor in action against an enemy force that can be bestowed upon an individual serving in the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, Filipino Americans have served the public in a wide range of capacities, including, but not limited to, Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court, representatives to the United States Congress, legislators in the state legislatures of California and other states, and other city, state, and federal leaders of the United States; and

WHEREAS, Throughout the history of the United States, Filipino Americans have made cultural, economic, political, social, and other contributions to our country that have become a vital part of the rich, diverse, and vibrant tapestry of our nation; and

WHEREAS, Since World War II, federal, state, and local redevelopment projects, freeway and highway construction, urban decay, private development, demographic shifts, and poor city planning have destroyed a significant number of Filipino American historic sites and ethnic neighborhoods, and many of the remaining Filipino American communities and historic sites are in danger of being lost; and

WHEREAS, Preserving our Filipino communities throughout California and the United States is critical to the preservation of Filipino culture, history, traditions, and heritage and to the preservation of our state and national history as well as our state and national future; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature recognizes the month of October 2015 as Filipino American History Month and the 428th anniversary of the first presence of Filipinos in the continental United States; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.