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ACR-23 Ritchie Valens Memorial Highway. (2017-2018)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 23

CHAPTER 128

Relative to the Ritchie Valens Memorial Highway.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 30, 2017.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 23, Bocanegra. Ritchie Valens Memorial Highway.

This measure would designate a specified portion of Interstate 5 in the County of Los Angeles as the Ritchie Valens 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, Richard Steven Valenzuela, who would come to be known internationally as "Ritchie Valens," was born on May 13, 1941, in Pacoima, California, a neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley region of Los Angeles, to Joseph Steven Valenzuela and Concepción Reyes; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens was raised with musical influences of traditional Mexican mariachi music and flamenco guitar, African American rhythm and blues vocal groups, and jump blues, leading him to express an interest in making music of his own; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens was encouraged by his father to learn to play the guitar and trumpet, and his love for music later led him to teach himself the drums; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens became popular for bringing his guitar to his school, Pacoima Junior High School, to sing and play songs to his friends in the bleachers; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens, at 16 years of age, accepted an invitation to play guitar and sing vocals in a local garage band, the Silhouettes, a diverse group that reflected Pacoima's ethnic mix and was composed of African American, Chicano, and Japanese American members; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens and the Silhouettes played at dances, gatherings, and parties throughout the northeast end of the San Fernando Valley, and Valens' boisterous vocals and expert guitar skills helped draw big crowds, leading him to be known as "Little Richard of the Valley"; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens was discovered by a talent scout one night in May 1958 when the Silhouettes packed the American Legion Hall in Pacoima; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens was invited by Bob Keane, the owner and president of Del-Fi Records in Hollywood, California, to audition for his record label, eventually signing him to a solo recording contract with Del-Fi Records on May 27, 1958; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens' first recorded original, "Come On, Let's Go," was recorded in July 1958, and became an immediate success; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens struck even greater success with his second single, a dual-sided record featuring the songs "La Bamba," an acknowledgment of his Chicano heritage, and "Donna," an ode to his high school girlfriend, Donna Ludwig, whom he met at San Fernando High School, which sold over one million copies, and was awarded a gold disc by the Recording Industry Association of America; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens' career skyrocketed, and in the remaining months of 1958, he appeared on Dick Clark's "American Bandstand" television show, performed alongside Buddy Holly, and played at Alan Freed's Christmas Jubilee in New York City; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens began traveling the Midwest in early 1959 as a member of a multimember rock 'n' roll tour called "The Winter Dance Party"; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens' promising career was heartbreakingly cut short when, on February 3, 1959, after leaving a performance in Clear Lake, Iowa, at the tender young age of 17, he passed away in a private airplane accident with fellow musicians Buddy Holly and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson, a tragedy that was later eternalized as "the day the music died"; and

WHEREAS, To this day, Ritchie Valens is regarded as a rock and roll pioneer and the forefather of the Chicano rock movement, inspiring others at a time when there were very few Latinos in American rock music; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens' rendition of "La Bamba," featuring successful blending of traditional Latin American music with classic rock 'n' roll music, proved to be a historic recording that would come to influence other famous Chicano musicians; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby designates the portion of Interstate 5 from State Route 118 to State Route 170 in the County of Los Angeles as the Ritchie Valens 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.