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ACR-23 Abraham Lincoln's birthday. (2019-2020)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 23

CHAPTER 16

Relative to Abraham Lincoln's birthday.

[Filed with Secretary of State March 11, 2019.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 23, Lackey. Abraham Lincoln's birthday.

This measure would declare that President Abraham Lincoln be honored on February 12, 2019, the anniversary of his birthday.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, and one of our nation's most respected and admired Americans, rose from humble beginnings to become President of the United States and courageously led the country during its darkest time, the Civil War; and

WHEREAS, President Lincoln brought a profound honesty and integrity to the Office of the President, and will always be remembered as "Honest Abe." Most of all, he will forever be associated with saving the Union and with the abolition of slavery; and

WHEREAS, President Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809, in Kentucky, and spent the first seven years of his life there; and

WHEREAS, In his entire life, President Lincoln was only able to attend school for a total of one year. This lack of formal education only made him hungrier for more knowledge, and he mastered the Bible, the works of William Shakespeare, and the law; and

WHEREAS, In 1846, he was elected to the United States Congress as the only member of the Whig Party in the Illinois congressional delegation, where he forthrightly articulated his views against the Mexican-American War and his vehement opposition to the extension of slavery, choosing not to run for reelection in 1848; and

WHEREAS, Soon after President Lincoln joined the Republican Party, a new political party opposed to the extension of slavery, the Republicans nominated him for the United States Senate in 1858. In his nomination acceptance speech, Lincoln stated: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure, permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved — I do not expect the house to fall — but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become lawful in all the States, old as well as new — North as well as South." He lost in a close election to Stephen Douglas, the Democratic Party candidate; and

WHEREAS, Just two years later, having won the Republican party nomination for President of the United States, President Lincoln won the election by a small margin, defeating, among other candidates, Senator Stephen Douglas; and

WHEREAS, Shortly after assuming office, the Civil War began. As the war continued, President Lincoln expanded the objectives of the war beyond saving and restoring the Union, but also to freeing the slaves and abolishing the institution of slavery; and

WHEREAS, On September 22, 1862, President Lincoln took the first major step toward the total abolition of slavery in the United States by issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, which took effect on January 1, 1863; and

WHEREAS, President Lincoln enunciated the nation's loftiest ideals during its darkest moment following the bloodiest battle of the Civil War. His Gettysburg Address, regarded as one of the finest speeches in the English language, was delivered by him at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on November 19, 1863, while dedicating a cemetery for those killed in the Battle of Gettysburg, which took place from July 1 to July 3, 1863, between the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia; and

WHEREAS, In his Gettysburg Address, President Lincoln reaffirmed the nation's foremost founding principles, declaring the United States to be a nation "conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal," while assuring a nation still consumed by war "that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth"; and

WHEREAS, To ensure that the provisions of the Emancipation Proclamation could not be construed as a mere wartime measure, President Lincoln insisted that enactment of a constitutional amendment abolishing slavery be included in the 1864 Republican Party platform; and

WHEREAS, Upon reelection to a second term as President of the United States in 1864, President Lincoln actively supported the passage in Congress of what became the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution, with the copy of the joint resolution referring the 13th Amendment to the states for ratification, which to this day is housed in the National Archives, actually bearing President Lincoln's signature, even though the President has no formal constitutional role in the amendment process, and joint resolutions do not go to the White House for either signature or approval; and

WHEREAS, President Lincoln ultimately reunified the nation and brought about a successful conclusion to our nation's bloodiest war, as the Civil War ended on April 9, 1865, with the surrender of General Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia to the Union General, Ulysses S. Grant, at Appomattox Court House; and

WHEREAS, Only five days later, on April 14, 1865, President Lincoln was shot while viewing a performance of "Our American Cousin" at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C., and died the next day, not living to see his dreams of the formal abolition of slavery and the restoration of the Union realized; and

WHEREAS, President Lincoln's accomplishments and legacy as the "Great Emancipator" and "Preserver of Our Union" are perhaps unsurpassed in the history of our nation, and it is particularly appropriate to recognize President Lincoln, a portrait of whom hangs in a place of honor in the Assembly Chambers; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby declares that President Abraham Lincoln be honored on February 12, 2019, the anniversary of his birthday, not only in recognition of his numerous accomplishments and contributions to our nation, but also as the virtual symbol of the American Dream, whereby an ordinary person from the most humble beginnings can reach the pinnacle of American society to be elected President, and to serve the country with honor and courage; and be it further

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