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ACR-57 American Legion. (2019-2020)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 57

CHAPTER 122

Relative to the American Legion.

[Filed with Secretary of State July 23, 2019.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 57, Brough. American Legion.

This measure would commemorate the American Legion for 100 years of service to the United States.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, The American Legion was chartered by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans organization focusing on service to veterans, service members, and communities; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion evolved from a group of war-weary veterans of World War I into one of the most influential nonprofit groups in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Soon after its beginning, membership swiftly grew to over 1,000,000, as local posts sprang up across the country, and today, membership stands at over 2,000,000 in more than 13,000 posts worldwide, which are organized into 55 departments consisting of one each for the 50 states, along with the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, France, Mexico, and the Philippines; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion Department of California is composed of 6 legion areas, 30 districts, 442 posts, and close to 100,000 members; and

WHEREAS, Since its inception, the American Legion has influenced considerable social change in America, won hundreds of benefits for veterans, and produced many important programs for children and youth; and

WHEREAS, In 1921, the American Legion's efforts resulted in the creation of the United States Veterans Bureau, forerunner of the United States Veterans Administration, and today it continues to lobby for adequate funding to cover medical, disability, education, and other benefits for veterans; and

WHEREAS, In 1925, the American Legion created the American Legion Baseball program that today proudly counts more than 50 percent of Major League Baseball players as graduates of the program. Approximately 82,000 youths play on Legion-sponsored teams each year; and

WHEREAS, In 1935, the first American Legion Boys State program convened to help youths gain an understanding of the structure and operation of the federal government, and today more than 19,500 young men participate in Boys State; and

WHEREAS, In 1938, the American Legion's first annual National High School Oratorical Contest was conducted in Norman, Oklahoma, and today, more than 3,400 high school students from around the country compete annually in the contest, which promotes a greater understanding of the United States Constitution, and the winners receive thousands of dollars in college scholarships; and

WHEREAS, In December 1943, American Legion Commander Harry Colmery wrote the GI Bill in longhand on Mayflower Hotel stationery in Washington, D.C., the first draft of what would later become the "GI Bill of Rights," considered the American Legion's single greatest legislative achievement, which ushered in monumental changes in educational access for veterans and helped to democratize the higher education system; and

WHEREAS, In 1946, the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary presented a small, struggling organization called the American Heart Association with a \$50,000 grant, which inaugurated a nationwide program for the study, prevention, and treatment of rheumatic heart disease, and in 1950 contributed funds to the field of mental health, thereby playing a key role in launching the National Association for Mental Health; and

WHEREAS, In 1990, the American Legion filed suit against the federal government for failure to conduct a Congress-mandated study about the effects of Agent Orange on veterans who served in Vietnam, and in 1995 formed the Persian Gulf Task Force to enhance service for the newest generation of wartime veterans, thousands of whom suffer from illnesses linked to their service in the region; and

WHEREAS, In 2001, the American Legion created the Legacy Scholarship Fund for children of military members who were killed on active duty on or after September 11, 2001; and

WHEREAS, In August 2017, Denise H. Rohan of Wisconsin was elected national commander of the American Legion, the first woman to hold the role in the American Legion's history; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature commemorates the American Legion for 100 years of service to the United States; and be it further

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