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ACR-103 Valley Fever Awareness Month. (2023-2024)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 103

CHAPTER 156

Relative to Valley Fever Awareness Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State September 08, 2023.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 103, Vince Fong. Valley Fever Awareness Month.

This measure would declare August 2023 as Valley Fever Awareness Month.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, Valley Fever (coccidioidomycosis), a progressive, multisymptom, respiratory disorder, is a debilitating disease; and

WHEREAS, Valley Fever is caused by the inhalation of tiny airborne fungi that live in the soil but are released into the air by soil disturbance or wind; and

WHEREAS, Valley Fever attacks the respiratory system, causing infections that can lead to symptoms that resemble a cold, influenza, or pneumonia; and

WHEREAS, If left untreated or mistreated, infection can spread from the lungs into the bloodstream, causing inflammation to the skin, permanent damage to lung and bone tissue, and swelling of the membrane surrounding the brain, leading to meningitis, which can be devastating and even fatal; and

WHEREAS, Once serious symptoms of Valley Fever appear, including pneumonia and labored breathing, prompt treatment with often toxic antifungal drugs must be given, which is especially disagreeable for patients who require the drugs to be injected beneath the base of their skulls for meningitis and which can cause side effects, including nausea, fever, and kidney damage; and

WHEREAS, Within California alone, Valley Fever is found in portions of the Sacramento Valley, all of the San Joaquin Valley, desert regions, and portions of southern California; and

WHEREAS, California does not have an official statewide method of tracking the rate of Valley Fever infections; and

WHEREAS, According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Valley Fever infection rates rose twelvefold nationwide from 1995 to 2009, inclusive, and researchers estimate that the fungus infects more than 150,000 people each year who either suffer serious ailments without knowing the cause of their illness or escape detection of the disease; and

WHEREAS, According to the CDC, between 1999 and 2011, the rate of infection of Valley Fever in California rose more than 600 percent, from 939 cases in 1999 to 5,697 cases in 2011, before declining to 2,243 cases in 2014, but increasing again to 7,546 cases in 2018; and

WHEREAS, In the County of Kern, the rate of infection of Valley Fever more than tripled from 2009, for a total of 2,051 cases in 2010 and 2,734 cases in 2011, before declining to 1,210 cases in 2014 and spiking again to nearly 2,500 cases in 2016; and

WHEREAS, Although the rate of Valley Fever infection in California declined between 2011 and 2014, it increased annually between 2014 and 2018, infecting Californians at eight times the rate of infection in 1999; and

WHEREAS, According to the State Department of Public Health, from January 1 to October 31, 2017, inclusive, 5,121 provisional cases of Valley Fever were reported in California. This is an increase of 1,294 provisional cases from the provisional 3,827 cases reported during that same time period in 2016; and

WHEREAS, Misdiagnosis of Valley Fever is so pervasive that experts say some people suffer and even die from Valley Fever without knowing they ever had the disease; and

WHEREAS, Governor Edmond G. Brown Jr. declared a Drought State of Emergency on January 17, 2014, and California continues to experience record dry conditions; and

WHEREAS, Dry conditions and lack of precipitation present urgent problems regarding Valley Fever; and

WHEREAS, Valley Fever is usually found in soil two to eight inches, inclusive, from the surface, and the extreme dry conditions caused by drought increase the chances of coccidioidomycosis airborne fungi exposure; and

WHEREAS, Central valley prison inmates have been infected by Valley Fever at epidemic rates, contributing significantly to the state's prison health care costs; and

WHEREAS, The rapid spread of Valley Fever at state prisons in the central valley has resulted in multiple prison inmate deaths and prompted calls to close certain affected prisons, further exacerbating efforts to comply with federal orders to reduce prison overcrowding; and

WHEREAS, Valley Fever kills between 100 to 200, inclusive, more Americans every year than tuberculosis; and

WHEREAS, Valley Fever most seriously affects the young, the elderly, those with lowered immune systems, and those of African American and Filipino descent; and

WHEREAS, Valley Fever is a disease that has been studied for the past 100 years but still remains impossible to control and difficult to treat; and

WHEREAS, There is no known cure for Valley Fever, but researchers are closer than ever to finding a much-needed vaccine against this devastating disease; and

WHEREAS, The research effort to find a vaccine for Valley Fever and a funding partnership including the State of California were approved by the Legislature and signed by Governor Pete Wilson in 1997; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby proclaims August 2023 as Valley Fever Awareness Month; and be it further

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