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ACR-205 Portuguese Heritage Month: Day of Portugal: Day of the Azores. (2023-2024)

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Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 205

CHAPTER 167

Relative to Portuguese Heritage Month.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 19, 2024.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 205, Aguiar-Curry. Portuguese Heritage Month: Day of Portugal: Day of the Azores.

This measure would declare the month of June 2024 to be Portuguese Heritage Month and would recognize June 10 as the Day of Portugal and May 20 as the Day of the Azores.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, Portuguese presence in California predates the establishment of California as a State in the Union; and

WHEREAS, The first Portuguese settlers came to California from the Azores Islands in the early 19th century. Waves of Azorean immigrants moved to California just before and during the 20th century, with the first wave of Azorean immigrants moving to California just before and after the turn of the 20th century, followed by the second and largest wave between 1958 and 1976, each contributing substantially to setting up agricultural operations, especially dairy, livestock, vegetable, fruit farms, and the tuna industry in southern California; and

WHEREAS, Throughout most of the 20th century, as many as one-half of all Portuguese Californians owned or operated a dairy farm, worked on a dairy farm, or worked in a dairy-related industry. Applying the Portuguese belief in hard work and thriftiness, along with additional labor from family members, Portuguese settlers could earn enough to reinvest in their businesses, and buy more land and cattle. Still today, Portuguese Americans in California continue to play an important role in agriculture and dairying, as proprietors and innovators; and

WHEREAS, Historically, California has been a popular destination for immigrants from the Azores Islands, creating strong cultural ties between the two regions; currently there are more than 350,000 persons of Portuguese heritage living in California, approximately 90 percent of whom have either come directly from the Azores Islands or are of Azorean ancestry; and

WHEREAS, In early 1855, the Old Company of Portuguese Whalers, a 15-member enterprise, was owned and operated by Azoreans in the City of Monterey, and, in the City of San Diego, Portuguese immigrants, mostly from the islands of the Azores and Madeira, had a prominent position in the tuna industry; and

WHEREAS, The Portuguese fraternal movement has played a role in the financial and cultural stability of the community, led today by two societies, the Portuguese Fraternal Society of America and the Luso-American Fraternal Federation, with headquarters in this state; and

WHEREAS, Portuguese language courses taught at community heritage schools, public elementary and high schools, community colleges, the California State University system, University of California campuses, and private colleges build cognizance of the importance of the Portuguese language as a world language and awareness to the contributions that Californians of Portuguese ancestry have given this state, as well as building exchanges with colleges and universities in Portugal, including the recently created Portuguese Beyond Borders Institute at the California State University, Fresno, with its new approach to conferences, oral history, research, academic publications, symposiums, exchange programs in agriculture, and community outreach, including the only Azorean Diaspora Center in the CSU system; and

WHEREAS, Californians of Portuguese ancestry came together in 2016 to create the California Portuguese American Coalition sponsored by the Luso-American Development Foundation to create a network of public servants of Portuguese ancestry and elected officials who represent areas where Californians of Portuguese ancestry live and contribute to our rich diversity and to encourage young Portuguese Americans to participate in our democracy through public service; and

WHEREAS, In March of 2018, Californians of Portuguese ancestry created the only strategic plan in the United States to teach the Portuguese language and cultures in California public and private schools, colleges, and universities in order to contribute to the rich linguistic and cultural diversity of our state and to foster a deeper connection to, and increase economic opportunities between, California and all the Portuguese-speaking countries throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, The State of California has a sister state relationship with the Autonomous Region of the Azores, adopted in 2002, and recently revised by working with a Friends of the Azores group to bring further development in not only cultural exchanges, but also in important areas such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, tourism, and technology; and

WHEREAS, Among the great Portuguese Americans who have contributed significantly to this country are: composer John Philip Sousa, best known for composing "Stars and Stripes Forever"; poet Emma Lazarus, best known for composing a sonnet about the Statue of Liberty, "The New Colossus"; and architect William L. Pereira, best known for designing the Transamerica Pyramid in San Francisco. Many Portuguese Americans have also served with distinction in local, state, and federal office, and have served proudly in this country's military; and

WHEREAS, Portuguese Americans have made valuable and substantial contributions to every facet of California life including the entertainment industry, the most notable of whom are Mary Astor, Katy Perry, Tom Hanks, Joe Perry, Nuno Bettencourt, Steve Perry, and James Franco; and

WHEREAS, The Portuguese community press, through radio, newspaper, and television, have been important vehicles in maintaining the Portuguese American experience in California, serving as bridges to our multicultural state, currently through the Tribuna Portuguesa, the only bilingual Portuguese newspaper in the western United States; and

WHEREAS, The Portuguese Heritage Society of California built the Portuguese Historical Museum to serve as a center for the display of Portuguese heritage and culture, and the Portuguese Heritage Publications of California, through book publications, have recorded Portuguese contributions to this state in various facets; and

WHEREAS, The Portuguese Holy Ghost Festival and other religious and cultural festivals are an important part of the communities in which they are held, bringing communities together and preserving and disseminating in mainstream California the rich traditions of a proud people who are completely integrated into Californian society; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby declares the month of June 2024 to be Portuguese Heritage Month and recognizes June 10 as the Day of Portugal and May 20 as the Day of the Azores; and be it further

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