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## **Youth-Led Campaign Drives Introduction of New “Disability History Week” Resolution**

SACRAMENTO, CA – A campaign led by young people with disabilities has resulted in the introduction of a new resolution authored by Assemblymember Jim Beall (D-San Jose), which aims to foster better understanding of the contributions people with disabilities have made to our society. ACR 162 co-authored by Assemblymember Jared Huffman (D-San Rafael) would designate the second week of October as Disability History Week and encourage schools and colleges to incorporate disability history into their curricula.

“Teaching disability history will bring a united vision and shared understanding that people with disabilities are so much more than their circumstance,” said Kevin-Dat Vu, a student at Fresno State University. “We want to educate youth that people with disabilities are just the same and can do exactly the same things.”

Part of a national youth-led movement to increase awareness of disability history, youth advocates in California launched their drive for a resolution recognizing Disability History week at a Youth Leadership Forum for Students with Disabilities in 2009. Their effort was supported by the YO! Youth Organizing Disabled and Proud, a program of the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers, the Silicon Valley Independent Living Center, Marin Center for Independent Living and comes after youth movements in several other states were successful in gaining recognition of Disability History Weeks. Nationwide, efforts to recognize disability history are supported by the federal Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy.

“Coming together for the Youth Leadership Forum, many youth learned about disability history for the first time. We realized that all students should know that people with disabilities have been important leaders in our communities and we pledged to take action to make sure our history is recognized,” said [youth]. “Youth organizers are proud to have brought this bill from idea to introduction and we look forward to working with Asm. Beall and Huffman to see it passed.”

ACR 162 acknowledges the significant gains people with disabilities have made in overcoming painful discrimination and exclusion from our communities and serves as a reminder that people with disabilities are still fighting for equal access to employment, education, and inclusion. Recognized in the resolution are leaders such as Ed Roberts, a former director of the California Department of Rehabilitation and one of the founders of the national disability rights and

independent living movements. The resolution would also highlight the activism and leadership from within the disability community that has resulted in important legislative accomplishments and landmark legal victories such as federal Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Supreme Court's landmark ruling in the Olmstead case.

"The history of the struggle for civil rights in America is incomplete without recognition of the battles fought by people with disabilities to gain equality," said Assemblymember Jim Beall. "Their stories need to be told. "People with disabilities will not be fully accepted as equal, contributing members of the community unless our children's education promotes an understanding and awareness of disability history and the disability rights movement."

ACR 162 would encourage school districts, community college districts, public and private institutions of higher learning and other organizations to observe Disability History Week by dedicating appropriate classroom instructional time or coordinating all-inclusive activities to be observed during that week to afford opportunities for students and the general public to expand their knowledge of disability history.

"I am extremely proud to be a co-author of this resolution," said Assemblymember Jared Huffman, Resolution ACR 162's principal co-author. "Raising awareness of disability issues in our educational facilities will foster a better understanding between students with and without disabilities and it will also help to achieve the ultimate goal of eliminating the discrimination and stigma towards the disability community."

Signaling the importance of ACR 162 to the disability community, the following organizations have already expressed their support for the bill: ARC California, California Disability Community Action Network, Disability Rights California, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, Disability Rights Legal Center, National Alliance on Mental Illness California, National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Northern California and World Institute on Disability.

*The California Foundation for Independent Living Centers, based in Sacramento, Calif., is a statewide, non-profit trade organization made up of 25 Independent Living Centers. Through unified action, CFILC envisions civil rights for all people with disabilities. CFILC's mission is to support independent living centers in their local communities through advocating for systems change and promoting access and integration for people with disabilities.*

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