Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 42

Introduced by Assembly Member Patterson

March 8, 2021

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 42—Relative to Lyme Disease Awareness Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 42, as introduced, Patterson. Lyme Disease Awareness Month.

This measure would proclaim the month of May 2021 as Lyme Disease Awareness Month.

Fiscal committee: no.

WHEREAS, Lyme disease is an often misunderstood illness that can cause serious health problems if it is not caught early and properly treated; and

WHEREAS, Lyme disease is a bacterial infection caused by the spirochete Borrelia burgdorferi and is primarily transmitted by the bite of an infected tick. The disease was first identified in North America in the 1970s in Lyme, Connecticut, for which it was named. Since that time, the disease has been found in all 50 states in the United States. The reach of Lyme disease is global, having been reported in more than 60 countries on six continents and several islands; and

WHEREAS, Lyme disease is a complex, multisystem illness. Early signs of infection may include rash and flu-like symptoms, including fever, muscle aches, headaches, and fatigue. Usually, the disease responds well to prompt treatment with appropriate antibiotics. If untreated or inadequately treated, however, Lyme

disease can invade multiple organs and systems of the body, including the brain and the rest of the nervous system. In those instances, patients can become increasingly disabled over time, suffering crippling muscle and joint pain, neurological impairment, psychological disorders, and a host of other symptoms that can lead to financial hardship, job loss, broken families, and even death; and

WHEREAS, Because there is no reliable form of testing that can accurately pinpoint Lyme disease, getting a proper diagnosis and prompt treatment is often extremely difficult; and

WHEREAS, Patients with Lyme disease are frequently misdiagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, multiple sclerosis, and various psychiatric illnesses, including depression. Misdiagnosis of these other diseases often delays the correct diagnosis and treatment, while the underlying infection progresses; and

WHEREAS, Lyme disease affects people of all ages but is most common in children and older adults, and in people who spend time outdoors in wooded, grassy areas, including park rangers and firefighters; and

WHEREAS, The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now estimates that about 476,000 Americans are diagnosed and treated for Lyme disease every year. This is greater than the number of women diagnosed with breast cancer every year; and

WHEREAS, Ticks have four life stages: egg, larval, nymphal, and adult. Both nymphs and adults can transmit diseases to humans. Ticks attach themselves to host animals, such as deer, rodents, and birds. As the host animals migrate to new areas, so do the ticks. Most people who contract Lyme disease get it from the bite of a nymphal tick. Because nymphs are as small as poppy seeds and their bite is painless, many people do not notice or remove them. The longer a tick is attached to the body, the more likely it will transmit whatever diseases it carries; and

WHEREAS, In California, the Lyme disease bacterium is transmitted by the western blacklegged tick (Ixodes pacificus). Ticks are active year round, especially when the environment is wet. Thus, this tick is most common in the coastal regions and along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada range, but has been found in 56 of California's 58 counties; and

WHEREAS, In some areas of California, Lyme disease infection rates of nymphal ticks have been found to be as high as 42 percent. Thus, the infection rate in certain regions of California is among the highest in the entire United States. However, because some areas of the state have not been tested for tick infection, the true scope of the problem is not known; and

WHEREAS, Although Lyme disease is the most common vectorborne infection in the United States, the ticks that spread Lyme disease can also spread other diseases at the same time. Among these coinfections are babesiosis, anaplasmosis, and ehrlichiosis. The presence of coinfections can complicate the treatment of Lyme disease; and

WHEREAS, Recently, three new borrelia species belonging to the Lyme disease spirochetal complex have been described, thus increasing the number of these bacteria known to occur in California to five and making California the locus of more distinct borrelia species than any other geographical region in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The Legislature finds that this disease presents a health threat to Californians; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby proclaims the month of May 2021 as Lyme Disease 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.

O