



Majority Leader Gonzalez
Representing Senate District 33

Senator Josh Becker
Representing Senate District 13

SB 537 – Mexican Repatriation Memorial

SUMMARY

SB 537 commemorates the approximately two million Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants who were illegally deported from the United States during the Great Depression.

BACKGROUND

The Mexican Repatriation Program was a forced deportation of Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants from the United States, primarily from California and other southwestern states, during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

This was done under the guise of creating jobs for “real Americans” during the economic crisis, even though the majority of the two million deported nationwide were U.S. citizens. In California alone, it is estimated that around 400,000 people of Mexican descent, including U.S. citizens and legal residents, were forcibly deported or coerced into leaving Mexico through tactics like raiders, threats, and acts of violence.

The program was initiated by the Hoover administration in 1929, with local authorities conducting massive raids on Mexican American communities and indiscriminately both Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants. People were rounded up, separated from families, and transported by rail, automobile, ship, and airplane to Mexico, being stripped of their citizenship and property in the process. The deportations violated the civil liberties and constitutional rights of U.S. citizens.

In total, it's estimated that around two million people of Mexican descent were forcibly relocated to Mexico during this period, with over half being U.S. citizens. The state of

California officially apologized for the “fundamental violations” of the “repatriation” program in 2005 (SB 670, Dunn).

PROBLEM

Despite California issuing a formal apology in 2005 and requiring the State Board of Education to consider including related content in the next revision of the History-Social Science Framework (AB 146, C. Garcia), the forced and unconstitutional deportation during the Mexican Repatriation Program of the 1930s remains a shamefully ignored period in California and United States history.

SOLUTION

SB 537 will authorize a designated non-profit entity, in consultation with the Department of General Services, to plan, construct, and maintain a memorial at an appropriate public place in Los Angeles to commemorate those Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants who were forcibly deported from the United States during the Great Depression.

Installed ahead of the upcoming World Cup and LA 2028 Summer Olympics, this memorial will increase awareness of this shameful period in California and United States history and properly memorialize the two million Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants who were illegally deported from the United States.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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