

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 1183

WHEREAS the California desert region serves residents across eight counties contained within the California Desert Conservation Area, an impressive population bloc exceeding 19 million residents – 48% of the entire state;

WHEREAS this region is also the ancestral homeland of numerous tribal communities;

WHEREAS the California desert region, which includes portions of the Mojave, Sonoran, and Great Basin deserts, is a globally significant area that covers over 29 million acres, approximately 28% of the state's land area;

WHEREAS the majority of the landscape has experienced little or no disturbance making it an extensive carbon storage and sink for the state of California;

WHEREAS the California deserts are characterized as having high biological diversity and are home to iconic species such as the federally listed desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) and the desert bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis nelsoni*);

WHEREAS, the California deserts region includes many national parks and preserves, national monuments, wilderness areas and state parks, and provides world-class opportunities for hiking, camping, sightseeing, rock climbing, rock hounding, off-highway vehicle use, and many other recreational activities;

WHEREAS this region's popularity among California and international recreationists has more than doubled within the past five years. For example, visitation to Joshua Tree National Park increased by 112 percent between 2013 and 2018.

WHEREAS this increase in public interest in California's desert has provided a regional economic boost: direct travel spending for the desert region amounted to \$7.6 billion dollars in 2018, with an increase of 6.7 percent between 2017-2018, and tourism and travel generated 73,000 jobs in 2018 while providing \$609 million in tax revenue for local and state governmental entities;

WHEREAS California funding initiatives, including past bonds, have invested far less conservation funding into the desert than other areas of California, particularly those regions with existing state conservancies, and this region needs more direct investment to protect and restore the natural and cultural resources and the recreational and economic benefits they provide; and

WHEREAS Assembly Bill 1183 shall direct more investment in the desert region by creating a desert conservation program within the state Wildlife Conservation Board, which provides funding to local agencies, non-profit organizations, and tribal organization for projects that address the impacts of climate change; protect, enhance, or restore desert habitat and sacred ancestral lands of indigenous peoples; provide public access or recreational amenities; or reduce the threats of wildfire, drought, flood, and other catastrophic events.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the San Bernardino County Democratic Party hereby supports Assembly Bill 1183 and the appropriation of state funds to launch this program at the Wildlife Conservation Board.