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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair  
2023 - 2024 Regular Session

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### SB 930 (Laird) - Memorial highways: Memorial Highway Signage Fund

**Version:** April 25, 2024

**Urgency:** No

**Hearing Date:** May 13, 2024

**Policy Vote:** TRANS. 11 - 4

**Mandate:** No

**Consultant:** Mark McKenzie

**Bill Summary:** SB 930 would establish the Memorial Highway Signage Fund in the State Treasury, and make all moneys deposited into the fund available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for its costs in erecting signage for memorial highway designations for individuals who have promoted racial and gender equity.

**Fiscal Impact:**

- Unknown cost pressures, potentially in excess of \$50,000, to appropriate General Fund revenues into the new special fund. See Staff Comments.

**Background:** Existing law vests Caltrans with the full possession and control of all state highways and the responsibility of operating and maintaining state highways, including the installation and maintenance of highway signs within state highway rights-of-way. Existing law directs Caltrans to place and maintain memorial signs along state highways that read "Please Don't Drink and Drive" followed by "In Memory of (deceased victim's name)," upon request from an immediate family member of a person who was killed by a driver intoxicated with drugs or alcohol.

Existing law requires Caltrans to adopt rules and regulations prescribing uniform standards and specifications for all official traffic control devices in the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Section 2M.10 of the MUTCD contains guidance for the placement of memorial signs that are requested through legislative action to name a freeway or highway, a bridge, an interchange, a rest area, a vista point, or a roundabout. Typically these signs are to be furnished at no cost to the state, as specified in the legislative resolution or act memorializing or dedicating a component of the highway. The district director must contact the sponsor of the legislation to determine appropriate wording for the signs, prepare a cost estimate and submit it to the sponsor, and purchase and install the signs upon receipt of funds from the sponsor. Costs for memorial signage typically ranges from \$8,000 to \$10,000.

Each year, the Legislature adopts a number of concurrent resolutions to name highways, bridges, and interchanges to memorialize a person who has provided extraordinary public service or other exemplary contribution to the public good. The large majority of those honored are law enforcement officers, and other common memorials are for military veterans, fire fighters, and construction workers. This concentration of memorials for certain professions is likely due to a combination of danger associated with those jobs, and the sponsors are often professional organizations capable of providing funding to cover construction costs of memorial signs. Because of historical and current gender imbalances in those professions, the

large majority of naming resolutions have been for men; since 2012, about 90% of the memorial resolutions adopted by the Legislature have memorialized men.

**Proposed Law:** SB 930 would establish the Memorial Highway Signage Fund in the State Treasury. All moneys in the fund, including state General Fund appropriations, public or private bequeaths, donations, gifts, or grants, and any federal funds, would be available to Caltrans, upon an appropriation by the Legislature, for costs to erect signage for memorial highway designations approved by the department that memorialize individuals who have promoted racial and gender equity.

**Related Legislation:** AB 776 (Holden), Chap. 543/2023, required Caltrans to work with specified entities to identify appropriate locations for highway signs and markers to recognize the historical and cultural importance of California tribes and tribal lands along State Route 210 in the Counties of Los Angeles and San Bernardino, and to erect those signs and markers.

AB 678 (Gaines), Chap. 747/2007, required Caltrans to, among other provisions, place signs encouraging people not to drink and drive and memorializing victims of drunk driving along state highways, and to adopt program guidelines for the application and placement of these signs.

**Staff Comments:** This bill establishes a new account in the State Treasury as a repository for any state General Fund appropriations, public or private donations or grants, and any federal funds that would be available to Caltrans, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to erect signage memorializing individuals who have promoted racial or gender equity. By establishing a new state fund and specifying that General Fund revenues may be appropriated to the fund, this bill would create General Fund cost pressures that could exceed \$50,000 in order to support the purposes of erecting specified memorial signs in a future fiscal year, to the extent non-state funding sources are not identified.

While the bill does not prescribe a process for accessing those funds, staff assumes that future bills or budget appropriations would be the most likely vehicles for appropriating funds from the Memorial Highway Signage Fund to pay for the costs of memorial signs. To the extent multiple bills or budget appropriations are enacted in a given year that require funding exceeding the amount of revenues available in the fund, this bill could create additional cost pressures to backfill any shortfalls.

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