



Advancing Peace and the Iranian-American Community

[REDACTED]

RE: ACR 2 (NAZARIAN) as introduced December 3, 2018 – SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member Nazarian,

The National Iranian American Council (NIAC Action), a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening the voice of Iranian Americans and promoting greater understanding between the American and Iranian people, **supports ACR 2.**

ACR 2 would recognize Norooz on March 21, 2019 as “the beginning of the Persian New Year and would extend best wishes for a peaceful and prosperous Norooz to all Californians.”

Norooz, which means "new day" in Persian, is celebrated on March 21st, the first day of spring and marks the beginning of the new year for over 300 million people. The holiday has been celebrated for over 3,000 years across Iran and other parts of the Middle East, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans, and other regions.

Some states, such as New York, have recognized the rich cultural history of Norooz and adopted it as an official state holiday. NIAC Action hopes that the California State Legislature—which represents the largest Iranian-American community in the United States—will adopt ACR-2 (Nazarian) to recognize and celebrate Norooz.

Renowned Persian poet Jalaluddin Rumi emphasized Norooz's theme of rebirth "on our planet and our souls." Indeed, the holiday's universal message has long made it a catalyst for intercultural dialogue and understanding. The commemoration of Norooz was central to the ancient Persian religion of Zoroastrianism, marking the end of winter and the rebirth of nature. To this day, it continues to be a celebration of life, renewal, and new beginnings.

For many Californians, especially those of Iranian background, Norooz is a time to appreciate their heritage. According to the 2010 United States Census, California is home to largest community of persons of Iranian descent in the United States, numbering over 200,000 residents. Many in the Iranian community believe this number

to be closer to one million given that many Iranian Americans do not self-identify when filling out census forms.

Los Angeles particularly has long been a hub for the Iranian diaspora. Dubbed "Tehrangeles," the city holds a special place in the collective imagination of Iranians everywhere. Persian restaurants and rug stores are ubiquitous across the city, and Iranian bookstores and music shops are not an uncommon sight. The religious, ethnic and cultural diversity of our community is also well represented there: the city boasts a prominent Iranian synagogue, mosques, Iranian-Armenian churches, and other places of worship.

Recognizing Norooz as a holiday reflects the rich diversity of California. It would give recognition to the growing Iranian-American community and honor its many contributions to the fields of business, arts, education, civic life, and beyond. It would further reaffirm that Iranian Americans are an integral part of California and promote American values of cultural pluralism and inclusion.

For these reasons, NIAC Action supports this resolution. Please contact NIAC Action Regional Organizer, Assal Rad, at assal@niacaction.org if you have any questions about our position or if we can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamal Abdi". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J" and "A".

Jamal Abdi
NIAC Action Executive Director