

NEWS RELEASE

Assemblymember Gloria Authors Law to Promote Cultural Diversity at High School Graduation

Gloria Introduces Legislation to Preserve Students' Rights to Free Speech & Cultural Expression during Commencement

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SACRAMENTO, CA – [California State Assemblymember Todd Gloria](#) (D-San Diego) announced today the introduction of his bill, AB 233, which will finally permit students to wear religious, ceremonial, and cultural adornments during high school graduation ceremonies, a practice that has not been permitted in some school districts throughout the state.

“As a member of the Tlingit-Haida Tribes of Alaska, I am very proud to author this bill. Current state law has allowed school districts to adopt policies preventing students from cultural expression on one of the most celebrated days of their lives,” said Assemblymember Gloria. **“California has long been one of the most inclusive and diverse states in the nation and we must continue to promote our collective diversity even when federal leaders seek to discourage it. With AB 233, we demonstrate to young people that pride in your cultural upbringing is not something to be silenced, but celebrated.”**

Under California Education Code, school districts have the authority to develop policies related to appropriate and inappropriate school attire, including what students can and cannot wear during graduation ceremonies. Several school districts throughout California have chosen to adopt and enforce “no adornment” policies thereby prohibiting students from wearing items of personal cultural importance during commencement.

In 2014, eight Native American high school seniors were restricted from wearing eagle feathers – a highly revered symbol of one’s passage into adulthood -- as part of their graduation regalia. Further, in 2016, an African-American student was not permitted to wear kente cloth – an important symbol of pride and achievement in African culture – at his commencement ceremony.

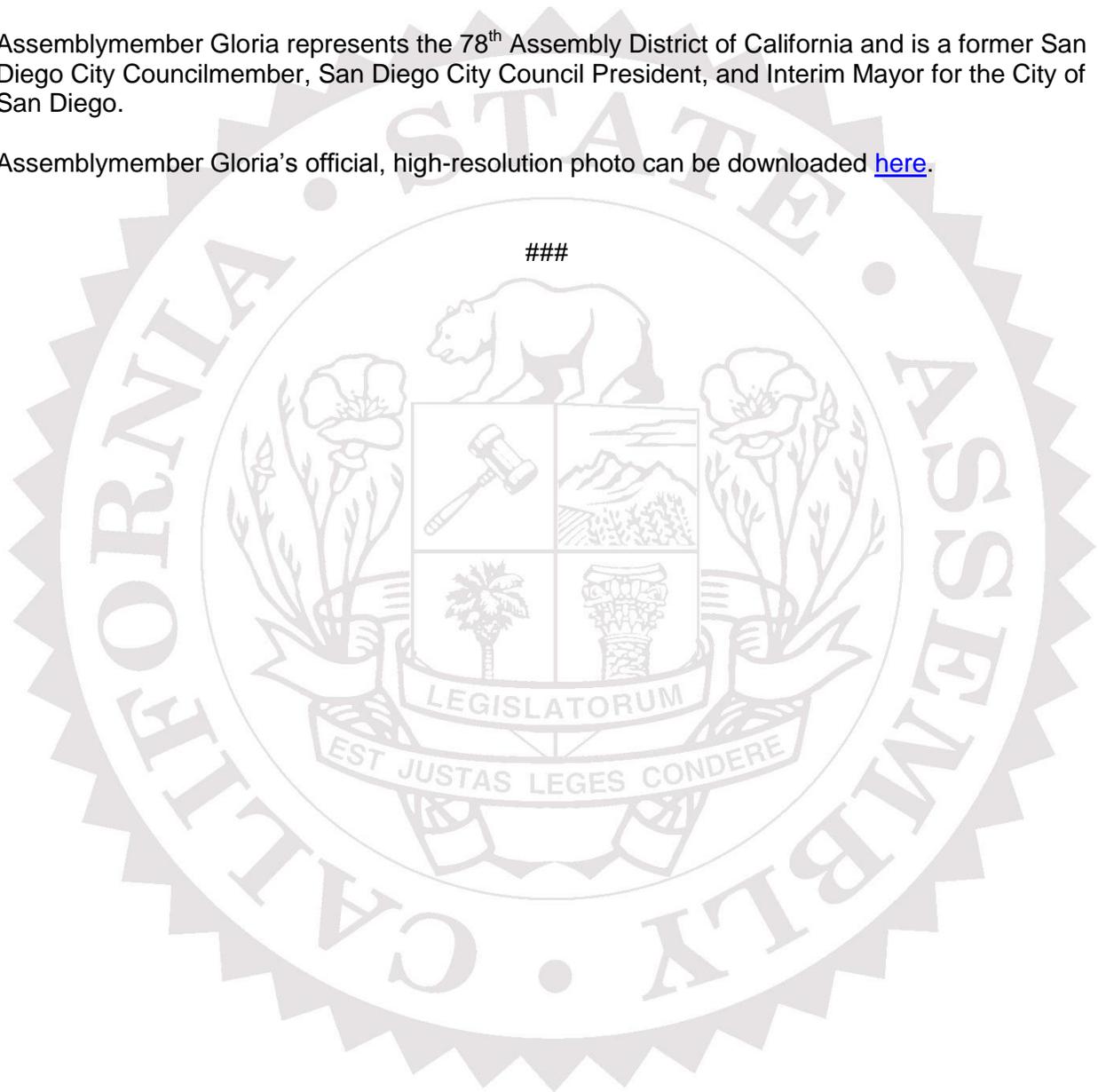
“AB 233 will ensure that all students are allowed to exercise the right the Freedom of Speech and bring a uniform policy throughout the numerous school districts in California,” said Dorothy Alther, Executive Director for [California Indian Legal Services](#) (CILS), a supporter of AB 233. **“CILS has been at the forefront of this issue during almost every high school graduation season and has seen firsthand the importance this small accommodation can make to students and their families. Allowing cultural, religious and**

traditional adornment on a student’s graduation cap or gown honors not only the student, but honors his or her heritage, tribal family and community.”

Assemblymember Gloria’s bill would amend the California Education Code to add an exception to § 35183 explicitly permitting students to wear religious, ceremonial, or cultural adornments at school graduation ceremonies. The full text of Assemblymember Gloria’s proposed law can be found [here](#).

Assemblymember Gloria represents the 78th Assembly District of California and is a former San Diego City Councilmember, San Diego City Council President, and Interim Mayor for the City of San Diego.

Assemblymember Gloria’s official, high-resolution photo can be downloaded [here](#).



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