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## **CALIFORNIA SENATE PASSES CALIFORNIA-ARMENIA TRADE OFFICE BILL**

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Panorama (23 May 2019)

Legislation that will re-establish a trade office between California and Armenia passed in the State Senate on consent with unanimous support on Wednesday. The bill, SB 302, was authored by State Senator Anthony J. Portantino, Asbarezreports.

SB 302 will formalize trade and economic ties between California and Armenia. As the representative of the largest Armenian community in the country, I am very honored and glad that this bill is moving forward in the Senate and I look forward to seeing the trade office established. California is an economic leader and the Armenian Community is a vital part of our success. This will be helpful to California and Armenia, commented Portantino.

SB 302 has Senator Scott Wilk (R- Santa Clarita) as a principal co-author and its co-authors are senators Melissa Hurtado (D-Sanger), Scott Winer (D-San Francisco), Henry Stern (D- Calabasas), as well as State Assmely members Autumn Burke (D- Inglewood) and Evan Low (D-Silicon Valley).

After advocating for the re-opening of the Trade Office first with Governor Brown and more recently with Governor Newsom and hosting a Legislative Trade Study trip to Armenia to lay a foundation for this project, the ANCA-WR is grateful to the California State Senate and to Senator Portantino for recognizing this as an important step toward further deepening the trade and economic relations between California and Armenia, especially in the IT, tourism, biotechnology, and other sectors. The ANCA-WR remains committed to use the resources at its disposal to help accomplish this goal, said Armenian National Committee of America-Western Region chairwoman Nora Hovsepian Esq.

In March, SB 302 unanimously, and with strong bi-partisan support, passed the State Senates Business and Professions Committee. Baibourtian flew to Sacramento to offer testimony in favor of the proposal.

Armenia is an important trade partner with California with strong and long-standing relationships. SB 302 will formalize trade and economic ties. As the representative of the largest Armenian community in a legislative district in the country, I am very honored and glad that this bill is moving forward in the Senate. California is embracing the Armenian Community and all it has to offer our state and its exciting to be part of that excitement, Portantino said at the time.

SB 302 will establish a regional trade office to promote economic relations in a developing area of the world that show emerging market potential. The regional trade office would be located in

Armenia and would serve the developing economies of Eastern Europe and Western Asia. Armenia has worked hard to develop diplomatic and economic ties worldwide. Today, 120 countries have recognized Armenia as an independent state and over 70 countries have established direct diplomatic relations.

One of my top priorities as Consul General is to increase economic opportunities between Armenia and the California. I was very pleased to offer testimony in support of this important proposal. There is tremendous excitement in Yerevan, Glendale and Sacramento about the burgeoning beneficial relationship on the horizon and feel we are capturing that excitement. Our hope it will lead to mutual benefit, said Armenia's Consul General to Los Angeles, Ambassador Armen Baibourtian, at the time of the March committee approval of the bill

Former Calif. State Senator Jack Scott originally created the California/Armenia International Trade Office through legislation. Former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger terminated it in 2007. SB 302 would require the Yerevan trade and investment office to, among other things, promote the export of California goods and services into the Republic of Armenia and facilitate access to educational exchange programs between California and the Republic of Armenia.

<https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2019/05/23/California-Armenia-Trade-Office-bill/2118632>

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