


REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

DATE: April 15, 2013

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections and Intergovernmental Relations Committee

FROM: Gerry F. Miller 
Chief Legislative Analyst

Council File No. 13-0194
Assignment No. T3-04-0311

SUBJECT: Resolution (Rosendahl-Garcetti-Perry) to suspend St. Petersburg, Sister City

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt or Receive and File Resolution to temporarily suspend the Council's action of December 8, 1989 which established a Sister City relationship with St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Russia.

SUMMARY: The subject Resolution, introduced on February 13, 2013, advises that St. Petersburg, Russia has recently embarked on anti-gay initiatives, including enactment of legislation curbing gay rights and a police crack down on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activities; last year, St. Petersburg approved a bill that imposes fines for the "promotion of homosexuality." The Resolution further advises that the St. Petersburg legislation banning "gay propaganda" seeks to restrict freedom of speech as well as such fundamental activities as gay pride festivals and parades; that two prominent Italian cities, Venice and Milan, have acted to sever cultural relations with St. Petersburg because of its anti-gay legislation; and that the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California as well as the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center, have approached the City of Los Angeles requesting that the City follow the lead of Italian cities Venice and Milan and terminate cultural exchanges and ties with our Sister City of St. Petersburg for its anti-gay initiatives.

The Resolution therefore requests that the City temporarily suspend its action of December 8, 1989 which established a Sister City relationship with St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Russia, such suspension to remain in effect until further action by the City Council.

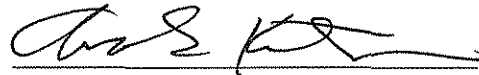
BACKGROUND: Los Angeles sister cities are established by City Council resolution in consultation with the Mayor. The programs for each sister city are operated by citizen committees whose initial appointments are confirmed by the City Council.

The Los Angeles - St. Petersburg Sister City Committee is a non-profit organization established in 1989. Dedicated to facilitating the flow of culture, ideas, and capital between Los Angeles and St. Petersburg, the Committee has promoted and supported cultural exhibits and exchanges, educational programs, medical interchange, charitable projects, business and technological cooperation between these two cities. For more than 20 years this organization

has engaged in numerous mutual exchange projects and activities. These efforts are discussed on the organization's web site: <http://www.laspscc.org/>

The City of Los Angeles has 25 sister cities. All of them have active sister city status with Los Angeles, with the exception of Tehran, Iran. In 1979, the City of Los Angeles suspended its relationship with its Sister City of Tehran, Iran as a result of the political situation and the resulting hostage crisis of that time (CF 72-1719-S1). At the time of that political crisis, the City Council had initially expressed a desire to terminate its sister city relationship with Tehran. However, upon the advice and intervention of the U.S. State Department, the relationship was not terminated but merely suspended.

Suspension of a Sister City is a policy decision for the City Council and the Mayor.



Avak Keotahian
Analyst

Attachment: Resolution (Rosendahl-Garcetti-Perry)

13-0194

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RESOLUTION NO. 111111 ELECTIONS & INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

WHEREAS, the People to People (Sister Cities) program was established by President Eisenhower in 1956 to establish greater friendship and understanding between the peoples of the United States and other nations through the medium of direct personal contacts; and

WHEREAS, to implement this program, the cities of the United States were requested to affiliate with cities abroad under the auspices of Sister Cities International, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, the City of Los Angeles established a Sister City relationship with St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Russia on December 8, 1989 (CF 89-1289); and

WHEREAS, St. Petersburg has recently embarked on anti-gay initiatives, including enactment of legislation curbing gay rights and a police crack down on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activities; last year, St. Petersburg approved a bill that imposes fines for the "promotion of homosexuality;" and

WHEREAS, the St. Petersburg legislation banning "gay propaganda" seeks to restrict freedom of speech as well as such fundamental activities as gay pride festivals and parades; and

WHEREAS, two prominent Italian cities, Venice and Milan, have acted to sever cultural relations with St. Petersburg because of its anti-gay legislation; on January 28, the Venice city council unanimously approved a motion asking officials to cease cultural exchanges as long as anti-gay laws are in place; and

WHEREAS, the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California as well as the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center, have approached the City of Los Angeles requesting that the City follow the lead of Italian cities Venice and Milan and terminate cultural exchanges and ties with our Sister City of St. Petersburg for its anti-gay initiatives; and

WHEREAS, in 1979, the City of Los Angeles suspended its relationship with its Sister City of Tehran, Iran as a result of the political situation and the hostage crisis (CF 72-1719-S1); and

WHEREAS, the Los Angeles Sister City program is a "people-to-people" program aimed at establishing greater friendship and understanding with peoples of other nations but in light of the anti-gay initiatives of St. Petersburg it is not realistic or possible to pursue this goal of "friendship and understanding" at this time, especially since Los Angeles is recognized for furthering the rights of all citizens and is ranked as a leader in LGBT rights;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that by the adoption of this Resolution with the concurrence of the Mayor, the City of Los Angeles hereby temporarily suspends its action of December 8, 1989 which established a Sister City relationship with St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Russia, such suspension to remain in effect until further action by the City Council.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Clerk is hereby directed to notify all interested parties of this action, including the local committee established in Los Angeles to implement the Sister City relationship with St. Petersburg, Sister Cities International, Inc., and others as appropriate.

PRESENTED BY: Bill Rosen Dahl
BILL ROSENDAHL
Councilman, 11th District

[Signature]
February 12, 2013
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SECONDED BY: [Signature]

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