



## Press Release

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### **Governor Signs Law Inspired by Montebello Unified Students** **Bell Garden Elementary 5th-Graders Pushed to Include Mexican Repatriation in Textbooks**

**MONTEBELLO, Calif.** – When future California schoolchildren read about the Mexican Repatriation Act in social studies textbooks, they'll have Leslie Hiatt's Bell Garden Elementary students to thank. Hiatt's 2014-15 fifth-graders suggested including the repatriation in textbooks in their winning entry to Assemblymember Cristina Garcia's annual "There Ought to Be a Law" contest for new state legislation. Garcia's resulting bill was signed by Gov. Jerry Brown on Oct. 1 and becomes effective Jan. 1, 2016.

"This is an extraordinary day for Montebello Unified, one that recognizes the strength of our civics instruction program and the dedication and talent of our students, who applied what they learned in class to solve a real-world problem," said Montebello Unified Board President Edgar Cisneros. "Because of these students, it's also an extraordinary day for California."

The Mexican Repatriation, authorized by President Herbert Hoover, resulted in the unconstitutional deportation during the 1930s of an estimated 1 million U.S. citizens and lawful residents of Mexican descent from California and neighboring states.

Hiatt's students, who had been studying issues related to undocumented children, researched the impact of the program, despite a paucity of available information, and presented their findings to Garcia through skits, poems, PowerPoint presentations and a book.

"These students are the most prepared people that have lobbied me on a bill," said Garcia, D-Bell Gardens, who represents the 58<sup>th</sup> District and is a Montebello Unified graduate.

Impressed, Garcia wrote Assembly Bill 146 calling for the program's inclusion in social studies textbooks, and invited the students to Sacramento, where they effectively lobbied for the bill's passage in both English and Spanish.

"I'm proud of the courage and tenacity of our students in fighting to fix an omission in our educational system," Montebello Unified Superintendent Susanna Contreras Smith said. "They not only showed great compassion and understanding about the issue, but great initiative in taking an active hand to determine what should be an essential part of our instruction."

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