

Outlook

SAN MARINO

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SMHS Students Make Impact in Sacramento

Six San Marino High School seniors jetted to Sacramento recently for a whirlwind day in which they lobbied high-ranking government officials to require the state's high school world history teachers to devote classroom time to the Armenian Genocide.

Jordan Agajanian, Will Derrick, Zareh Hairapetian, Trenten Kaufeldt-Lira, Liam Moravec and Andre Zahn, all students in Peter Paccone's college-prep U.S. government class at SMHS, sat in on six meetings with prominent lawmakers and government officials. It was a heady lineup: state Superintendent of Education Tom Torlakson, state Sen. Carol Liu (chair of the Senate Education Committee), Assemblyman Ed Chau (whose district includes San Marino), Assemblyman Rob Banta, Assemblywoman Joan Buchanan (chair of Assembly Education Committee) and Assemblyman Adrin Nazarian.

Nazarian is co-sponsor of Assembly Bill 1915, which seeks to require teachers in grades 7-12 to include instruction in human-rights issues, with particular attention to the Armenian Genocide, in which up to 1.5 million Armenians were killed by Turkey's Ottoman government beginning in 1915, according to the Armenian National Institute.

The students encouraged lawmakers to support AB 1915. They also enlightened officials about their CAP, or Civic Action Project, in which they give the state's world history teachers



Photos courtesy Peter Paccone

On a busy day of lobbying lawmakers and officials in Sacramento, San Marino High School students pause for a photo with Assemblyman Adrin Nazarian (center). The students on the trip were (from left) Andre Zahn, Will Derrick, Liam Moravec, Jordan Agajanian, Trenten Kaufeldt-Lira and Zareh Hairapetian.

good reason to teach a two-day genocide lesson without it being required.

In their lobbying efforts "they sincerely made San Marino High School look good in the process," Paccone said. "Everyone was immensely impressed with the quality of our students' presentations and the manner in which they fielded questions afterward."

The bill subsequently cleared

the Assembly Education Committee, prompting Paccone to say, "Given that only 5% of bills ever make their way out of committee, this is a huge win for our six."

While at the Capitol, the students were honored on the Assembly floor by Chau, who praised them for their CAP Project. They also met with various leaders and representatives of the state's Armenian community.



San Marino High School student Jordan Adajanian gets an audience with state Superintendent of Education Tom Torlakson (left) and his chief of staff, Craig Chelsog, on a recent visit to Sacramento with other fellow U.S. government students.

"They sincerely made San Marino High School look good."

— Peter Paccone, teacher

