

1 [Ruth Asawa Day - February 12, 2026]

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3 **Resolution recognizing February 12, 2026, as Ruth Asawa Day in honor of her work as**
4 **an artist and advocate for arts education in the City and County of San Francisco.**
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6 WHEREAS, Ruth Asawa, born on January 24th, 1926 in Norwalk, California, was one
7 of the most admired artists, educators, and civic leaders of the 20th century; and

8 WHEREAS, Over her six-decade career, she created an extensive body of work
9 exploring various artistic mediums, including bronze casts, drawings, paintings, prints, public
10 works, and the looped-wire sculptures for which she is most famous; and

11 WHEREAS, Although Asawa was based in San Francisco, her artistry is known
12 throughout the world, with the exhibition of her art today at the Museum of Modern Art in New
13 York being the museum's largest exhibit ever dedicated to a female artist; and

14 WHEREAS, Asawa's many public artworks, including murals, fountains, and
15 sculptures, can be found throughout San Francisco; and

16 WHEREAS, This body of work, as well as her advocacy and belief in arts education for
17 all, embodied the belief that "art is for everybody," and

18 WHEREAS, Asawa was the fourth of seven children born to Japanese immigrant truck
19 farmers in Norwalk, California; and

20 WHEREAS, When she was just 16 years old, Asawa, along with 120,000 other people
21 of Japanese descent, was illegally forced from her home and into incarceration camps by the
22 United States government, based on unfounded fears and xenophobia following the Pearl
23 Harbor attacks; and
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1 WHEREAS, Despite the harsh conditions of the camp and the anxiety of seeing her
2 family being torn apart, Asawa showed immense resilience and resourcefulness, taking art
3 lessons from fellow detainees; and

4 WHEREAS, After leaving the internment camp, Asawa studied to be an art teacher, but
5 anti-Japanese sentiment kept her from becoming a student teacher; and

6 WHEREAS, She eventually attended Black Mountain College in North Carolina, an
7 experimental college that emphasized the practice of making art; and

8 WHEREAS, There, Asawa was able to work directly with the established artists who
9 taught there, and her time at Black Mountain inspired her advocacy for arts schools and
10 education that were accessible to all; and

11 WHEREAS, After leaving Black Mountain, Asawa moved to San Francisco, where she
12 began raising her family and continued her career as an artist; and

13 WHEREAS, Her work was inspired by nature regardless of her medium, with the most
14 famous being her abstract looped-wire sculptures inspired by organic shapes; and

15 WHEREAS, Asawa was also known for her many public arts projects, many of which
16 pieces can still be seen around San Francisco today; and

17 WHEREAS, These include the *San Francisco Fountain* in Union Square and the
18 *Andrea* mermaid fountain at Ghirardelli Square, the *Garden of Remembrance* memorial to the
19 Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II, which is located at San Francisco
20 State University, as well as the wire sculptures she donated to the Fine Arts Museum of San
21 Francisco, which are now accessible to the public in the lobby of the De Young Museum; and

22 WHEREAS, Asawa was also a fierce advocate for the arts and was determined to
23 make art education accessible for all, especially for children; and

1 WHEREAS, in 1968, she established the Alvarado School Arts Workshop program,
2 which brought both parents and professional artists into public schools to introduce children to
3 art; and

4 WHEREAS, At its height, the program reached more than 50 schools, becoming a
5 model for the San Francisco Art Commission's Comprehensive Employment and Training
6 Act/Neighborhood Arts Program, which employed artists of all disciplines to do public service
7 work for this City, and later being replicated all over the United States; and

8 WHEREAS, Asawa also became a member of the San Francisco Arts Commission
9 around the same time and later served on the California Arts Council and the National
10 Endowment for the Arts, as well as serving as a trustee of the Fine Arts Museums of San
11 Francisco; and

12 WHEREAS, Asawa also played a key role in founding San Francisco's public arts high
13 school in 1982, renamed the Ruth Asawa San Francisco School of the Arts in her honor in
14 2010; and

15 WHEREAS, In 2022, Asawa was posthumously awarded the National Medal of Arts for
16 both her modernist work and her arts advocacy; and

17 WHEREAS, In 1982, San Francisco declared February 12 to be Ruth Asawa Day in
18 honor of her work as an artist and advocate for arts education, and this year marks what
19 would have been Asawa's 100th birthday; now, therefore, be it

20 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco
21 hereby recognizes February 12, 2026, as Ruth Asawa Day.
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