

Introduced by Senator Wolk
(Principal coauthor: Assembly Member Galgiani)
(Coauthor: Senator La Malfa)

August 20, 2012

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 104—Relative to the 100-year anniversary of the Sikh American community.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 104, as introduced, Wolk. One-hundred-year anniversary of the Sikh American community.

This measure would state that the Legislature recognizes October 13, 2012, as the 100-year anniversary of the Sikh American community, and would call upon the people of California to commemorate the day with appropriate celebrations.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, October 13, 2012, will be recognized as the
2 100-year anniversary of the Sikh American community; and
3 WHEREAS, Sikhs, traveling from their homeland of Punjab,
4 first arrived in the United States through Angel Island Immigration
5 Station in San Francisco in 1899; and
6 WHEREAS, The Stockton Gurdwara Sahib, which was founded
7 in 1912, is recognized as the first permanent Sikh American
8 settlement and gurdwara in the United States; and
9 WHEREAS, Baba Jawala Singh and Baba Wasakha Singh,
10 founding granthis of the Stockton Gurdwara Sahib, who first
11 emigrated to the United States through Angel Island in 1908,
12 recognized the supreme value of education by starting the Sri Guru
13 Govind Singh Educational Scholarships for University of

1 California, Berkeley, students, and awarded the first scholarships
2 on January 1, 1912, without regard for gender, ethnicity, or
3 religion, to a Christian, to a Sikh, to a Muslim, and to three Hindus;
4 and

5 WHEREAS, The Stockton Gurdwara Sahib was founded by
6 Teja Singh of the Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society on October
7 24, 1912, with Baba Jawala Singh and Baba Wasakha Singh in
8 leadership; and

9 WHEREAS, The Ghadar, the first Punjabi-language newspaper
10 in the United States, was published on November 1, 1913, by
11 Kartar Singh Sarabha, then 17 years of age, with financial support
12 from the Stockton Gurdwara Sahib; and

13 WHEREAS, Baba Jawala Singh and Baba Wasakha Singh
14 organized the Gadri Conclave in Sacramento on December 31,
15 1913, to form the Ghadar Party; and

16 WHEREAS, The Ghadar Party was the first organized and
17 sustained campaign of resistance to the British empire's occupation
18 of the Indian subcontinent, and it sent 616 members to India, of
19 whom 527 were Sikhs; and

20 WHEREAS, Kartar Singh Sarabha traveled to India to support
21 the independence movement, but at 19 years of age was tragically
22 arrested and hanged, along with young Maratha Vishnu Ganesh
23 Pingley and five other Sikh Ghadris, by the British on November
24 16, 1915; and

25 WHEREAS, The Stockton Gurdwara Sahib, upon completion,
26 was dedicated on November 21, 1915, to Guru Nanak Dev Ji,
27 founder of the Sikh tradition, on the occasion of his 426th birth
28 anniversary; and

29 WHEREAS, The gurdwara furnished provisions to the people
30 of Stockton, as reported by the Stockton Record on November 22,
31 1915, which quoted the gurdwara's elected leadership: "We do
32 not permit our people to become charges on public charity. If a
33 man is hungry and out of funds we feed him. Our dining room is
34 open at all hours of the day and is closed only for a few hours
35 during the night. The unfortunate hungry American will be as
36 welcome as our own people"; and

37 WHEREAS, The Stockton Gurdwara Sahib funded a delegation,
38 including Dr. Sudhindra Bose of Iowa University and Dr. Bishan
39 Singh of Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society, to attend a
40 congressional hearing on February 13, 1914, in Washington, D.C.,

1 to advocate for the citizenship rights of Indian and Asian peoples;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, Dr. Bhagat Singh Thind, then a student at
4 University of California, Berkeley, volunteered to serve in the
5 United States Army on July 22, 1918, at the height of World War
6 I, becoming the first Sikh to serve in the United States military,
7 and was honorably discharged after attaining the rank of Acting
8 Sergeant; and

9 WHEREAS, Thind persistently pursued United States
10 citizenship, receiving and losing it twice, and championed Asian
11 American citizenship rights all the way to the United States
12 Supreme Court in the landmark case of United States v. Bhagat
13 Singh Thind (1923) 261 U.S. 204, before permanently obtaining
14 citizenship in 1935; and

15 WHEREAS, The Stockton Gurdwara Sahib continued to support
16 higher education among the South Asian population by establishing
17 Guru Nanak Khalsa Hostel at University of California, Berkeley,
18 on February 13, 1921, to provide free board and lodging for
19 students from South Asia to peacefully focus on their studies; and

20 WHEREAS, Dalip Singh Saund was general secretary of the
21 Stockton Gurdwara Sahib from 1948 to 1950, inclusive, and a
22 member of the executive committee until 1953, and became the
23 first Asian American, first Indian American, and first Sikh to serve
24 in the House of Representatives when elected in 1956 to represent
25 California's 29th Congressional District until 1963; and

26 WHEREAS, Dr. Bruce La Brack of the University of the Pacific
27 describes the impact of the Stockton Gurdwara Sahib thus: "The
28 Stockton gurdwara gave a focal point to Punjabi life on the West
29 Coast; it served as a combination church, dining hall, rest home,
30 employment information center, meeting place, political forum,
31 and sanctuary where Punjabi culture and language were understood.
32 The Stockton facility was a hub of social, religious, and political
33 life for all Sikhs and many other Punjabis in California between
34 1915 and the late 1970s"; and

35 WHEREAS, The Sikh American community continues to make
36 significant contributions to the California and United States
37 economy and society through military service, as business owners,
38 transportation professionals, doctors, attorneys, engineers, teachers,
39 farmers, and in a great many other notable capacities; and

1 WHEREAS, The Sikh American community has faced and
2 continues to peacefully overcome attacks on its identity and
3 practices since the September 11, 2001, attacks, whether in the
4 form of school harassment, employment discrimination, or murder,
5 including the murders of six Sikhs during the Oak Creek Wisconsin
6 Sikh Gurdwara shooting on August 5, 2012, as well as the senseless
7 murders of Surinder Singh and Gurmej Atwal in Sacramento on
8 March 4, 2011; and

9 WHEREAS, The faithful service of the Sikh American
10 community to this state and country merits appreciation as an
11 integral thread in the fabric of American plurality; now, therefore,
12 be it

13 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly*
14 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature recognizes October 13,
15 2012, as the 100-year anniversary of the Sikh American
16 community, and calls upon the people of California to
17 commemorate the day with appropriate celebrations; and be it
18 further

19 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
20 this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.