

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 37

Introduced by Assembly Member Gray

February 27, 2015

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 37—Relative to Sikh American Awareness and Appreciation Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 37, as introduced, Gray. Sikh American Awareness and Appreciation Month.

This measure would designate November 2015 as California Sikh American Awareness and Appreciation Month. The measure would recognize and acknowledge the significant contributions Californians of Sikh heritage have made to the state. The measure would also seek to afford all Californians the opportunity to understand, recognize, and appreciate the rich history and shared principles of Sikh Americans.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, California and our nation are at once blessed and
- 2 enriched by the unparalleled diversity of our residents; and
- 3 WHEREAS, The Sikhs, who originated in Punjab, India, first
- 4 entered California in 1899 legally through the Angel Island
- 5 Immigration Station in San Francisco, California; and
- 6 WHEREAS, The Sikh pioneers initially worked on railroad
- 7 construction projects, and in lumber mills; and
- 8 WHEREAS, By 1910, these pioneers turned to farming in the
- 9 Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Imperial valleys; and
- 10 WHEREAS, On October 14, 1912, the first Sikh temple
- 11 (Gurdwara) in the United States, the Sikh Temple Stockton, was

1 founded by Professor Teja Singh of the Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan
2 Society; and

3 WHEREAS, There are now more than 100 Gurdwaras in the
4 United States; and

5 WHEREAS, The Stockton Record, dated November 22, 1915,
6 quoted the Gurdwara's elected leadership declaring, "We do not
7 permit our people to become charges on public charity"; and

8 WHEREAS, Legislation to authorize Sikhs and other East Indian
9 immigrants to naturalize as United States citizens was not enacted
10 until 1946; and

11 WHEREAS, On January 1, 1912, Jawala Singh and Wasakha
12 Singh, who immigrated to California through Angel Island in 1908
13 and served as the founding Granthis of the Sikh Temple Stockton,
14 recognized the value of education, and started six Sri Guru Govind
15 Singh Educational Scholarships at the University of California,
16 Berkeley; and

17 WHEREAS, These scholarships were awarded without regard
18 to ethnicity or religion and the first awardees included three
19 Hindus, one Christian, one Sikh, and one Muslim; and

20 WHEREAS, Board and lodging was provided at the students'
21 home at 1731 Allston Way, Berkeley, where smoking and drinking
22 were prohibited; and

23 WHEREAS, On November 1, 1913, Ghadar, the first
24 Punjabi-language newspaper in the United States, was published
25 by Kartar Singh Sarabha, who was then 17 years of age, with
26 financial support from the Stockton Gurdwara; and

27 WHEREAS, On December 31, 1913, Jawala Singh and Wasakha
28 Singh organized the Ghadri Conclave in Sacramento to form the
29 Ghadar Party to overthrow the British colonial rulers of the Indian
30 subcontinent; and

31 WHEREAS, The Ghadar Party sent 616 of its members to India,
32 of whom 86 percent were Sikhs; and

33 WHEREAS, Homage is paid to them annually at a dozen
34 different gatherings (Melas) from Sacramento, California, to
35 Bakersfield, California; and

36 WHEREAS, The Sikh history and culture is represented in the
37 Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, in the Smithsonian Museum
38 in Washington, D.C., in the Community Memorial Museum of
39 Sutter County, and the Museum at the Sikh Temple Stockton; and

1 WHEREAS, Sikh farmers contribute abundantly towards
2 production of peaches (Didar Singh Bains), raisins (Charanjeet
3 Singh Batth), pistachios (Mangar family), and okra and other
4 vegetables (Harbhajan S. Samra); and

5 WHEREAS, Sikhs have also excelled in security services (Akal
6 Security) and transportation services, and as doctors, attorneys,
7 engineers, teachers, and other notable capacities, and as small
8 business owners; and

9 WHEREAS, Dalip Singh Saund, a Sikh who was born in Punjab,
10 India, and earned a Ph.D. from the University of California,
11 Berkeley in 1924, initially worked as a foreman of cotton pickers
12 in the Imperial Valley, and later became a farmer, played a major
13 role in raising the funds needed to lobby for the Luce-Celler Act
14 of 1946 that enabled him and others to naturalize as citizens, and
15 served as an elected judge in the Westmoreland Judicial District
16 from 1952 to 1956, before becoming the first Asian American
17 elected to the United States Congress, wherein he served three
18 terms from 1957 to 1963; and

19 WHEREAS, Sikh Americans have served as mayors of many
20 California cities, including, for example David Dhillon in El
21 Centro, Guralp Samra in Livingston, Amarpreet “Ruby” Dhaliwal
22 in San Joaquin, Sonny Dhaliwal in Lathrop, and Kashmir Singh
23 Gill in Yuba City. Numerous Sikh Americans have served as
24 council members of California cities; and

25 WHEREAS, Bhagat Singh Thind, a Sikh born in Punjab, India,
26 who was a United States veteran of World War I, who campaigned
27 actively for the independence of India from the British Rule, and
28 who supported Indian students and lectured on metaphysics
29 throughout the United States, has been honored by the Fred
30 Korematsu Institute as a “Race in the Courts Hero” for fighting
31 his citizenship case in the United States Supreme Court in 1923;
32 and

33 WHEREAS, Sikhs have served in all American wars since
34 World War I; and

35 WHEREAS, Narinder Singh Kapany of Palo Alto, a Sikh born
36 in Punjab, India, is an accomplished scientist and inventor, who
37 has been awarded over 100 patents that spurred advances in lasers,
38 biomedical instrumentation, pollution monitoring, and solar energy,
39 and is widely acknowledged to be the father of fiber optics, a

1 technology that has allowed for high-speed digital communication;
2 and

3 WHEREAS, Yuba City, often called “Mini-Punjab” because of
4 its 10 percent Punjabi population, commemorates the inauguration
5 of the holy Sikh scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, on the first
6 Sunday of November, rain or shine, and this international event
7 has in recent years attracted up to 100,000 participants from all
8 over the United States, Canada, and even abroad; and

9 WHEREAS, Sikh Americans throughout California celebrate
10 the coronation of Sikh scripture and other Sikh festivals at the
11 Gurdwaras and through parades in cities across California and the
12 United States; and

13 WHEREAS, Various Sikh organizations, including the Sikh
14 Council of Central California, the Sikh Coalition, the Sikh
15 American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Sikhs United,
16 Jakara, and individual Gurdwaras participate in interfaith meetings,
17 seminars, conferences, meetings, and functions and share the tenets
18 of their monotheistic religion that respects other religions and
19 welcome all to their Gurdwaras, and try to promote mutual
20 understanding and respect among all peoples; and

21 WHEREAS, The Sikh American community continues to make
22 significant contributions to the California and United States
23 economies and societies through military service, as business
24 owners, transportation professionals, doctors, attorneys, engineers,
25 teachers, farmers, and in a great many other notable capacities;
26 and

27 WHEREAS, Since September 11, 2001, the Sikhs are often
28 mistaken for terrorists of Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaida owing to
29 the commonality of beard and the turban, and subjected to a
30 disproportionately high rate of hate crimes, and Sikh boys suffer
31 bullying at twice the national bullying rate for other boys; and

32 WHEREAS, The Sikh American community continues to
33 peacefully overcome attacks on its identity and practices, whether
34 in the form of school harassment, employment discrimination, or
35 fatal shootings, including the murders of six Sikhs during the Oak
36 Creek Wisconsin Sikh Gurdwara shooting on August 5, 2012, as
37 well as the senseless murders of Surinder Singh and Gurmej Atwal
38 in Elk Grove, California, on March 4, 2011; and

39 WHEREAS, The faithful service of the Sikh American
40 community to this state and country merits appreciation as an

1 integral thread in the fabric of American plurality; now, therefore,
2 be it

3 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
4 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature hereby designates the
5 month of November 2015 to be California's Sikh American
6 Awareness and Appreciation Month; and be it further

7 *Resolved*, That the Legislature recognizes and acknowledges
8 the significant contributions made by Californians of Sikh heritage
9 to our state, and by adoption of this resolution, seeks to afford all
10 Californians the opportunity to better understand, recognize, and
11 appreciate the rich history and shared principles of Sikh Americans;
12 and be it further

13 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
14 of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution to the
15 Members of the Legislature, to the Superintendent of Public
16 Instruction for the purpose of advising county and district
17 superintendents and charter school administrators, to members of
18 the California Sikh American community, and to other interested
19 organizations or persons.