

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 27, 2015

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2015–16 REGULAR SESSION

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 37

Introduced by Assembly Member Gray

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Achadjian, Alejo, Travis Allen, Atkins, Baker, Bigelow, Bloom, Bonta, Brown, Calderon, Chang, Chau, Chávez, Chiu, Chu, Cooley, Cooper, Dababneh, Dahle, Daly, Dodd, Eggman, Frazier, Beth Gaines, Gallagher, Cristina Garcia, Eduardo Garcia, Gatto, Gipson, Gomez, Gonzalez, Gordon, Grove, Hadley, Harper, Roger Hernández, Holden, Irwin, Jones, Jones-Sawyer, Kim, Lackey, Levine, Linder, Lopez, Low, Maienschein, Mathis, Mayes, McCarty, Medina, Melendez, Mullin, Nazarian, Obernolte, O'Donnell, Olsen, Patterson, Perea, Quirk, Rendon, Ridley-Thomas, Rodriguez, Salas, Santiago, Steinorth, Mark Stone, Thurmond, Ting, Wagner, Waldron, Weber, Wilk, Williams, and Wood)

February 27, 2015

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

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 37, as amended, 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
12 founded by Professor Teja Singh of the Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan
13 Society; and

14 WHEREAS, There are now more than 100 Gurdwaras in the
15 United States; and

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

19 WHEREAS, Legislation to authorize Sikhs and other East Indian
20 immigrants to naturalize as United States citizens was not enacted
21 until 1946; and

22 WHEREAS, On January 1, 1912, Jawala Singh and Wasakha
23 Singh, who immigrated to California through Angel Island in 1908
24 and served as the founding Granthis of the Sikh Temple Stockton,
25 recognized the value of education, and started six Sri Guru Govind
26 Singh Educational Scholarships at the University of California,
27 Berkeley; and

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

31 WHEREAS, Board and lodging was provided at the students'
32 home at 1731 Allston Way, Berkeley, where smoking and drinking
33 were prohibited; and

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

1 WHEREAS, On December 31, 1913, Jawala Singh and Wasakha
2 Singh organized the Ghadri Conclave in Sacramento to form the
3 Ghadar Party to overthrow the British colonial rulers of the Indian
4 subcontinent; and

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

7 WHEREAS, Homage is paid to them annually at a dozen
8 different gatherings (Melas) from Sacramento, California, to
9 Bakersfield, California; and

10 WHEREAS, The Sikh history and culture is represented in the
11 Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, in the Smithsonian Museum
12 in Washington, D.C., in the Community Memorial Museum of
13 Sutter County, and the Museum at the Sikh Temple Stockton; and

14 WHEREAS, Sikh farmers contribute abundantly towards
15 production of peaches (Didar Singh Bains), raisins (Charanjeet
16 Singh Batth), pistachios (Mangar family), and okra and other
17 vegetables (Harbhajan S. Samra); and

18 WHEREAS, Sikhs have also excelled in security services (Akal
19 Security) and transportation services, and as doctors, attorneys,
20 engineers, teachers, and other notable capacities, and as small
21 business owners; and

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

32 WHEREAS, Sikh Americans have served as mayors of many
33 California cities, including, for example David Dhillon in El
34 Centro, Gurpal Samra in Livingston, Amarpreet “Ruby” Dhaliwal
35 in San Joaquin, Sonny Dhaliwal in Lathrop, and Kashmir Singh
36 Gill in Yuba City. Numerous Sikh Americans have served as
37 council members of California cities; and

38 WHEREAS, Bhagat Singh Thind, a Sikh born in Punjab, India,
39 who was a United States veteran of World War I, who campaigned
40 actively for the independence of India from the British Rule, and

1 who supported Indian students and lectured on metaphysics
2 throughout the United States, has been honored by the Fred
3 Korematsu Institute as a “Race in the Courts Hero” for fighting
4 his citizenship case in the United States Supreme Court in 1923;
5 and

6 WHEREAS, Sikhs have served in all American wars since
7 World War I; and

8 WHEREAS, Narinder Singh Kapany of Palo Alto, a Sikh born
9 in Punjab, India, is an accomplished scientist and inventor, who
10 has been awarded over 100 patents that spurred advances in lasers,
11 biomedical instrumentation, pollution monitoring, and solar energy,
12 and is widely acknowledged to be the father of fiber optics, a
13 technology that has allowed for high-speed digital communication;
14 and

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

21 WHEREAS, Sikh Americans throughout California celebrate
22 the coronation of Sikh scripture and other Sikh festivals at the
23 Gurdwaras and through parades in cities across California and the
24 United States; and

25 WHEREAS, Various Sikh organizations, including the Sikh
26 Council of Central California, the Sikh Coalition, the Sikh
27 American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Sikhs United,
28 Jakara, and individual Gurdwaras participate in interfaith meetings,
29 seminars, conferences, meetings, and functions and share the tenets
30 of their monotheistic religion that respects other religions and
31 welcome all to their Gurdwaras, and try to promote mutual
32 understanding and respect among all peoples; and

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

39 WHEREAS, Since September 11, 2001, the Sikhs are often
40 mistaken for terrorists of Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaida owing to

1 the commonality of beard and the turban, and subjected to a
2 disproportionately high rate of hate crimes, and Sikh boys suffer
3 bullying at twice the national bullying rate for other boys; and

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

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

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

19 *Resolved*, That the Legislature recognizes and acknowledges
20 the significant contributions made by Californians of Sikh heritage
21 to our state, and by adoption of this resolution, seeks to afford all
22 Californians the opportunity to better understand, recognize, and
23 appreciate the rich history and shared principles of Sikh Americans;
24 and be it further

25 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
26 of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution to the
27 Members of the Legislature, to the Superintendent of Public
28 Instruction for the purpose of advising county and district
29 superintendents and charter school administrators, to members of
30 the California Sikh American community, and to other interested
31 organizations or persons.