

House Resolution

No. 46

Introduced by Assembly Member O'Donnell

March 31, 2016

House Resolution No. 46—Relative to Cambodian Genocide Memorial Day.

1 WHEREAS, The Cambodian people have a long and rich
2 cultural heritage symbolized by the temple city Angkor Wat,
3 considered one of the Wonders of the Ancient World, built between
4 the 9th and 12th centuries, and which stands as a living icon of the
5 endurance and genius of all Cambodians throughout the world;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, Early connections between the United States and
8 Cambodia began in the 1950s, when Cambodia sent bright and
9 talented college students to universities, including California State
10 University, Long Beach and California State University, Los
11 Angeles, to study technical trades, engineering, and agriculture
12 with the assistance of the United States Agency for International
13 Development; and

14 WHEREAS, The relationship between the United States and
15 Cambodia had been forged through educational and professional
16 exchange, and therefore in 1975, with the impending overthrow
17 of the government by the totalitarian Khmer Rouge regime, the
18 United States accepted over 4,000 Cambodian evacuees to ensure
19 their safety; and

20 WHEREAS, April 17, 2016, will mark both the 41st anniversary
21 of the Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot, seizing control of Cambodia,
22 and the beginning of the Cambodian genocide; and

1 WHEREAS, Between April 17, 1975, and January 7, 1979, the
2 Khmer Rouge of Democratic Kampuchea, led by Pol Pot, Secretary
3 General of the Communist Party of Kampuchea, and other members
4 of the Standing Committee of the Central Committee of the
5 Communist Party of Kampuchea and their agents, committed acts
6 of genocide and other crimes against humanity; and

7 WHEREAS, The genocide and other crimes against humanity
8 committed against the people of Cambodia, including various
9 religious groups and ethnic minorities, during the Khmer Rouge
10 regime led to the deaths of over 1,700,000 Cambodians, which
11 was 21 percent of the nation's population; and

12 WHEREAS, The Khmer Rouge regime also sought to eliminate
13 all aspects of Cambodian culture by systematically killing those
14 with education, separating families, and destroying institutions
15 such as Buddhist temples, schools, libraries, dance, and music;
16 and

17 WHEREAS, Countless victims have since come forward to tell
18 their stories of imprisonment, starvation, slavery, rape, and
19 systematic forced marriage; and

20 WHEREAS, After the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge regime
21 in 1979, over 140,000 Cambodians came to the United States as
22 refugees, a group of special humanitarian and foreign policy
23 concern to the United States because of the well-founded fear of
24 persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership
25 in a particular social group, or political opinion and thus in need
26 of protection in accordance with the United Nations' 1951
27 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees; and

28 WHEREAS, The State of California has the largest population
29 of Cambodians in the United States, and the City of Long Beach
30 is known around the world as home to the largest Cambodian
31 community outside of Southeast Asia; and

32 WHEREAS, The Cambodian people have drawn from their
33 cultural history to rebuild their lives and communities through
34 participation in American politics on the local and national levels,
35 by establishing local and international businesses, by developing
36 new art forms and community organizations, and by raising a new
37 generation of Americans who promise to contribute to the future
38 of the State of California and the nation; and

39 WHEREAS, The Cambodian genocide was a human tragedy
40 and must be remembered for the massive scale of violence and

1 devastation perpetrated against the people of Cambodia, so that it
2 does not happen again there or in any other country; and

3 WHEREAS, In 1994, the United States Congress passed the
4 Cambodian Genocide Justice Act, committing the American
5 government to the pursuit of justice for the victims of the genocide
6 and affirming the policy of the United States to bring members of
7 the Khmer Rouge to justice for their crimes against humanity; and

8 WHEREAS, The genocide and other crimes against humanity
9 did not succeed in destroying the Cambodian people or their
10 culture, and in fact the culture and heritage of the Cambodian
11 people continue to this day through the accomplishments of
12 Cambodians and their descendants; and

13 WHEREAS, The suffering and loss of the Cambodian people,
14 and their accomplishments and perseverance in reestablishing
15 families, communities, and enhancing the cultural and historical
16 diversity of our state and nation should be recognized and honored;
17 and

18 WHEREAS, The Cambodian Genocide Memorial Day will
19 honor the survivors and their descendants for their courage and
20 contributions to our state and country. This day will serve as a way
21 to remember those who lost their lives in Cambodia and in
22 genocides around the world; now, therefore, be it

23 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California*, That the
24 Assembly hereby recognizes April 17, 2016, as Cambodian
25 Genocide Memorial Day, and calls upon all Californians to observe
26 the day by participating in appropriate activities and programs;
27 and be it further

28 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
29 of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.