

Introduced by Senator Lara

April 6, 2015

Senate Resolution No. 21—Relative to Cambodian Genocide Memorial Week.

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, stands as a living icon of the endurance
5 and genius of all Cambodians throughout the world; and

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

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

19 WHEREAS, April 17, 2015, will mark both the 40th anniversary
20 of the Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot, seizing control of Cambodia
21 and the beginning of the Cambodian Genocide; and

22 WHEREAS, Between April 17, 1975, and January 7, 1979, the
23 Khmer Rouge of Democratic Kampuchea, led by Pol Pot, Secretary
24 General of the Communist Party of Kampuchea, and other members
25 of the Standing Committee of the Central Committee of the

1 Communist Party of Kampuchea and their agents, committed acts
2 of genocide and other crimes against humanity; and

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

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

13 WHEREAS, Countless victims have since come forward to tell
14 their stories of imprisonment, starvation, slavery, rape, and
15 systematic forced marriage; and

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

24 WHEREAS, The State of California has the largest population
25 of Cambodians and the City of Long Beach is known around the
26 world as home to the largest Cambodian community outside of
27 Southeast Asia; and

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

35 WHEREAS, The Cambodian genocide was a human tragedy
36 and must be remembered for the scale of violence and devastation
37 perpetrated against the people of Cambodia, so that it does not
38 happen again, there or in any other country; and

39 WHEREAS, In 1994 the United States Congress passed the
40 Cambodian Genocide Justice Act, committing the American

1 government to the pursuit of justice for the victims of the genocide
2 and affirming the policy of the United States to bring members of
3 the Khmer Rouge to justice for their crimes against humanity; and

4 WHEREAS, The genocide and other crimes against humanity
5 did not succeed in destroying the Cambodian people or their
6 culture, in fact the culture and heritage of the Cambodian people
7 continues to this day through the accomplishments of Cambodians
8 and their descendants; and

9 WHEREAS, The suffering and loss of the Cambodian people
10 and their accomplishments and perseverance in reestablishing
11 families, communities, and enhancing the cultural and historical
12 diversity of our state and nation should be recognized and honored;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, The Cambodian Genocide Memorial Week will
15 honor the survivors and their descendants for their courage and
16 contributions to our state and country. This week will serve as a
17 way to remember those who lost their lives in Cambodia and in
18 genocides around the world; now, therefore, be it

19 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California*, That the Senate
20 hereby recognizes the week of April 13 to April 17, 2009, inclusive,
21 as Cambodian Genocide Memorial Week, and calls upon all
22 Californians to observe the week by participating in appropriate
23 activities and programs; and be it further

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