

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 104

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 122

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

[Filed with Secretary of State September 10, 2012.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 104, 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.

WHEREAS, October 13, 2012, will be recognized as the 100-year anniversary of the Sikh American community; and

WHEREAS, Sikhs, traveling from their homeland of Punjab, first arrived in the United States through Angel Island Immigration Station in San Francisco in 1899; and

WHEREAS, The Stockton Gurdwara Sahib, which was founded in 1912, is recognized as the first permanent Sikh American settlement and gurdwara in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Baba Jawala Singh and Baba Wasakha Singh, founding granthis of the Stockton Gurdwara Sahib, who first emigrated to the United States through Angel Island in 1908, recognized the supreme value of education by starting the Sri Guru Govind Singh Educational Scholarships for University of California, Berkeley, students, and awarded the first scholarships on January 1, 1912, without regard for gender, ethnicity, or religion, to a Christian, to a Sikh, to a Muslim, and to three Hindus; and

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

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

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

WHEREAS, The Ghadar Party was the first organized and sustained campaign of resistance to the British Empire's occupation of the Indian

subcontinent, and it sent 616 members to India, of whom 527 were Sikhs; and

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

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

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

WHEREAS, The Stockton Gurdwara Sahib funded a delegation, including Dr. Sudhindra Bose of Iowa University and Dr. Bishan Singh of Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society, to attend a congressional hearing on February 13, 1914, in Washington, D.C., to advocate for the citizenship rights of Indian and Asian peoples; and

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Dr. Bruce La Brack of the University of the Pacific describes the impact of the Stockton Gurdwara Sahib thus: "The Stockton gurdwara gave a focal point to Punjabi life on the West Coast; it served as a combination church, dining hall, rest home, employment information center, meeting place, political forum, and sanctuary where Punjabi culture and

language were understood. The Stockton facility was a hub of social, religious, and political life for all Sikhs and many other Punjabis in California between 1915 and the late 1970s"; and

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

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

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

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

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