

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 147

**Introduced by Assembly Members Dickinson and Logue
(Coauthor: Assembly Member Perea)**

May 6, 2014

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 147—Relative to Sikh American Awareness and Appreciation Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 147, as introduced, Dickinson. Sikh American Awareness and Appreciation Month.

This measure would designate November 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

1 WHEREAS, On October 14, 1912, the first Sikh temple
2 (Gurdwara) in the United States, the Sikh Temple Stockton, was
3 founded by Professor Teja Singh of the Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan
4 Society; and

5 WHEREAS, There are now more than 100 Gurdwaras in the
6 United States; and

7 WHEREAS, The Stockton Record, dated November 22, 1915,
8 quoted the Gurdwara's elected leadership declaring, "We do not
9 permit our people to become charges on public charity. If a man
10 is hungry and out of funds we feed him. Our dining room is open
11 at all hours of the day and is closed only for a few hours during
12 the night. The unfortunate hungry American will be as welcome
13 as our own people"; and

14 WHEREAS, Legislation to authorize Sikhs to become United
15 States citizens was not enacted until 1946; and

16 WHEREAS, On January 1, 1912, Jawala Singh and Wasakha
17 Singh, who migrated to California through Angel Island in 1908
18 and served as the founding Granthis of the Sikh Temple Stockton,
19 recognized the value of education, and started six Sri Guru Govind
20 Singh Educational Scholarships at the University of California,
21 Berkeley; and

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

25 WHEREAS, Board and lodging was provided at the students
26 home at 1731 Allston Way, Berkeley, where smoking and drinking
27 were prohibited; and

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

32 WHEREAS, On December 31, 1913, Jawala Singh and Wasakha
33 Singh organized the Ghadri Conclave in Sacramento to form the
34 Ghadar Party to overthrow the British colonial rulers of the Indian
35 subcontinent; and

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

38 WHEREAS, Homage is paid to them annually at a dozen
39 different gatherings (Melas) from Sacramento, California, to
40 Bakersfield, California; and

1 WHEREAS, The Sikh history and culture is represented in the
2 Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, in the Smithsonian Museum
3 in Washington, D.C., in the Community Memorial Museum of
4 Sutter County, and the Museum at the Sikh Temple Stockton; and

5 WHEREAS, Sikh farmers contribute abundantly towards
6 production of peaches (Didar Singh Bains), raisins (Charanjeet
7 Singh Batth), pistachio (Mangar family), and okra and other
8 vegetables (Harbhajan S. Samra); and

9 WHEREAS, Sikhs have also excelled in security services (Akal
10 Security) and transportation services, and as doctors, attorneys,
11 engineers, teachers, and other notable capacities, and as small
12 business owners; and

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

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

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

37 WHEREAS, Sikhs have served in all American wars since WWI;
38 and

39 WHEREAS, Narinder Singh Kapany of Palo Alto, a Sikh born
40 in Punjab, India, is an accomplished scientist and inventor, who

1 has been awarded over 100 patents that spurred advances in lasers,
2 biomedical instrumentation, pollution monitoring, and solar energy,
3 and is widely acknowledged to be the father of fiber optics, a
4 technology that has allowed for high-speed digital communication;
5 and

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

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

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

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

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

35 WHEREAS, The Sikh American community continues to
36 peacefully overcome attacks on its identity and practices, whether
37 in the form of school harassment, employment discrimination, or
38 fatal shootings, including the murders of six Sikhs during the Oak
39 Creek Wisconsin Sikh Gurdwara shooting on August 5, 2012, as

1 well as the senseless murders of Surinder Singh and Gurmej Atwal
2 in Elk Grove, California, on March 4, 2011; and

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

7 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
8 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature hereby designates the
9 month of November to be California's Sikh American Awareness
10 and Appreciation Month; and be it further

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

17 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
18 of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution to the
19 Members of the Legislature, members of the California Sikh
20 American community, and other interested organizations or
21 persons.