ASSEMBLY CONCURRENT RESOLUTION No. 138

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 25, 2020

Sponsored by:
Assemblyman P. CHRISTOPHER TULLY
District 38 (Bergen and Passaic)
Assemblywoman LISA SWAIN
District 38 (Bergen and Passaic)
Assemblyman STERLEY S. STANLEY
District 18 (Middlesex)

Co-Sponsored by:
Assemblywomen Murphy and Vainieri Huttle

SYNOPSIS

Recognizes cultural, religious, and interfaith importance of Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji as "Living Guru" of Sikhs in promoting peace and declaring Sikhs as distinct ethnic and religious minority.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/21/2021)

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION recognizing the cultural, religious, and interfaith importance of Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji as "Living Guru" of Sikhs in promoting peace and declaring Sikhs as a distinct ethnic and religious minority.

WHEREAS, Founded by Guru Nanak in 15th Century Punjab, India, the Sikh monotheistic tradition teaches its adherents to practice the universal principles of truthful living, service to humanity, and devotion to God; and

WHEREAS, The Sikh community began immigrating to the United States in the late 1800s and has played an important role in developing this country and the State of New Jersey while enriching American culture, history, economy, and diversity; and

WHEREAS, Sikhism is the fifth largest religion in the world with more than 25 million Sikhs worldwide, including more than 750,000 in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Some of the most notable Sikhs in the United States live in and contribute to the State of New Jersey, including Attorney General Gurbir Grewal, City of Hoboken Mayor Ravinder Bhalla, and Burlington County Freeholder Balvir Singh; and

WHEREAS, The religion's emphasis on loving service to humanity also inspires Sikh's living in New Jersey to make lasting social contributions, such as providing free food to the less fortunate through the annual "Let's Share a Meal" event in Camden and Jersey City; and

WHEREAS, The tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji left the world and indicated to the generations ahead to avoid idol worship and recognize the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the principal scripture of Sikhism, as the "Living and Eleventh Guru" of the Sikh religion; and

WHEREAS, In a historic judgement delivered on March 29, 2000, the Supreme Court of India declared Guru Granth Sahib Ji as a "Juristic Person," further justifying Guru Gobind Singh Ji's declaration of Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji as the "Living Guru"; and

WHEREAS, Although Sikhs have made immense contributions throughout history, they have long faced oppression and discrimination throughout India and the rest of the world; and

WHEREAS, Article 25 of the Constitution of India defines Sikhs as a subset, and even close relatives, of Hindus; and

WHEREAS, In contrast, according to the Sikh religion and history, Sikhs share a unique set of beliefs and practices that are altogether different from other religions; and

WHEREAS, The State of New Jersey is committed to educating citizens about the world's religions, the value of religious diversity, tolerance grounded in First Amendment principles, a culture of mutual understanding, and the importance of reducing violence, all of which are consistent with Shri Guru Granth Sahib's teachings; and

WHEREAS, The State of New Jersey seeks to further the diversity of its community and afford all residents the opportunity to better understand, recognize, and appreciate the rich history and shared experiences of Sikhs and enforce laws for access to equal opportunity of humans irrespective of their caste, creed, color, and appearance; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED *by the General Assembly of the State of New Jersey (the Senate concurring):*

1. The Legislature of the State of New Jersey recognizes the cultural, religious, and interfaith importance of Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji as "Living Guru" of Sikhs in promoting peace and declaring Sikhs as a distinct ethnic and religious minority.

2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State, shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly or the Secretary of the Senate to the Governor of the State of New Jersey and the Attorney General of the State of New Jersey.

STATEMENT

This concurrent resolution recognizes the cultural, religious, and interfaith importance of Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji as "Living Guru" of Sikhs in promoting peace and declaring Sikhs as a distinct ethnic and religious minority.

Sikhism was founded in 15th Century Punjab, India, by Guru Nanak. The Sikh monotheistic tradition teaches its adherents to practice the universal principles of truthful living, service to humanity, and devotion to God. The Sikh community began immigrating to the United States over 100 years ago and has played an important role in developing this country and the State of New Jersey. Notable Sikhs contributing to the State include Attorney General Gurbir Grewal, City of Hoboken Mayor Ravinder Bhalla, and Burlington County Freeholder Balvir Singh. The religion's emphasis on loving service to humanity also inspires Sikh's living in New Jersey to make lasting social contributions, such as providing free food to the less fortunate through the annual "Let's Share a Meal" event in Camden and Jersey City.

When the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji left the world, he indicated to the generations ahead to avoid idol worship and recognize the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the principal scripture of Sikhism, as the "Living and Eleventh Guru" of Sikh religion. In a historic judgement delivered on March 29, 2000, the Supreme Court of India declared Guru Granth Sahib Ji as a "Juristic Person," further justifying Guru Gobind Singh Ji's declaration of Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji as the "Living Guru."

Although Sikhs have made immense contributions throughout history, they have longed faced oppression and discrimination throughout India and the rest of the world. For example, Article 25 of the Constitution of India defines Sikhs as a subset, and even close relatives, of Hindus. However, Sikh religion and history are extremely distinct and altogether different from other religions and ethnic groups. Therefore, the State of New Jersey finds it is crucial to recognize the Sikh religion and its history in promoting peace while declaring Sikhs as a distinct ethnic and religious minority.