

## SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 260

*Designating April 14, in 2013 and in each succeeding year, as the day to recognize the observance of Vaisakhi in Virginia.*

Agreed to by the Senate, February 5, 2013

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 15, 2013

WHEREAS, Vaisakhi is a holiday observed by Sikhs throughout the world, celebrating the spring harvest and commemorating the 1699 gathering at Anandpur Sahib in Punjab, India, when the founding of the Sikh family of soldier saints known as Khalsa Panth occurred; and

WHEREAS, the Sikh faith, which was established in the Punjab region of India in the 1400s, persevered and expanded, with Guru Gobind Singh founding the Khalsa Panth, a new order of Sikhism, in 1699; and

WHEREAS, the Sikh people have a renowned military history marked by gallantry and self-sacrifice that is epitomized by the heroic last stand at the Battle of Saragarhi; and

WHEREAS, the Battle of Saragarhi was fought on September 12, 1897, between the 36th Sikh Regiment of British India, defending an army post, and 10,000 Afghan and Orakzai tribesmen; and

WHEREAS, when the British commander radioed the 21 Sikhs, led by Havildar Ishar Singh, that timely reinforcement was impossible, they chose not to abandon the fort but instead, to stand and fight to the death; and

WHEREAS, details of the fight were continuously relayed to the command as the Sikhs died gallantly, one-by-one, delaying the Afghan attack so severely that the invading force was eventually repulsed; and

WHEREAS, the British Parliament rendered the Sikhs a standing ovation upon hearing the accounts, and Queen Victoria stated: "The British, as well as the Indians, are proud of the 36th Sikh Regiments. It is no exaggeration to record that the armies which possess the valiant Sikhs cannot face defeat in war"; and

WHEREAS, all 21 Sikhs who died at Saraghari were awarded the Indian Order of Merit, equivalent to the Victoria Cross; and

WHEREAS, today, the Sikh people, who now number in the tens of millions worldwide, mark Vaisakhi with parades, dancing, singing, and other festivities; and

WHEREAS, the Sikh community of Virginia, part of the rich cultural fabric of the Commonwealth, makes many valuable contributions as its members work in a variety of professions and businesses and contribute to their local communities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly designate April 14, in 2013 and in each succeeding year, as the day to recognize the observance of Vaisakhi in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to the Sikh Foundation of Virginia so that members of the organization may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the Senate post the designation of this day on the General Assembly's website.