

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 212

Commending the Greater Sikh Community of Northern Virginia.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 7, 2020

WHEREAS, Sikhism is a monotheistic religion that originated in the State of Punjab, located in what is now divided between modern-day India and parts of Pakistan; and

WHEREAS, Sikhism began with Guru Nanak, born in 1469, who developed the foundational tenets of the religion; nine Gurus proceeded after him and their teachings make up the Sri Guru Ganth Sahib, which are the written teachings and the religious text of Sikhi or otherwise anglicized as Sikhism; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, Sikhs across the world celebrated the 550th anniversary of the birth of Guru Nanak and the birth of Sikhi (Sikhism); and

WHEREAS, Sikhism is composed of three essential pillars, the first of which is *Naam Japna*, that translates as "focus on the Supreme Being," meaning that followers must believe in one Creator for all, shapeless, genderless, free of enemies and fearless; the second tenant is *Kirat Karni*, which means "to work honestly," and working with consistent determination, merit, and honor; the third tenant is *Vand Chakna*, meaning "sharing with others," and consisting of the integral value to consistently care about others and view all humans as equal and infused with divine beauty; and

WHEREAS, there are approximately 700,000 Sikhs in the United States and about 35,000 of them live in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, including Northern Virginia, where they have been part of the Commonwealth's history since the 1960s; and

WHEREAS, the practicing place of worship for Sikhs is called a Gurudwara or "door to the Guru," and there are a number of Gurudwaras within the Commonwealth, and specifically within Northern Virginia, including the Sikh Foundation of Virginia in Fairfax, the Sikh Center of Virginia in Manassas, the Raj Khalsa Gurdwara in Sterling, and the Sikh Sangat of Virginia in Chantilly; and

WHEREAS, the first Gurudwara in Virginia was the Sikh Foundation of Virginia, founded in Fairfax in 1986; and

WHEREAS, the Sikh Center of Virginia was founded in February 2009 and is celebrating its 11th anniversary in 2020; the head of the clergy at the center is Minister of Faith (Granthi) Darshan Singh; and

WHEREAS, the first Sikh elected to public office in the Commonwealth was Satyendra Huja as a member of the Charlottesville City Council in 2007; and

WHEREAS, the second Sikh elected to public office in the Commonwealth was Mansimran Kahlon, elected as director of the Prince William County Soil and Water Board in Northern Virginia in 2019; and

WHEREAS, an important practice and tradition within the Sikh religion is *Seva*, the implementation of actions of service into justification; and

WHEREAS, being Sikh means being devoted to the world and those that live within it; Sikhs demonstrate genuine concern for the well-being of others, and within Virginia, practicing Sikhs are often involved in nonprofit work and acts of selfless volunteer work for the greater good of the community, such as aiding people experiencing homelessness, through projects like Homeless *Langar*, participating in weekly food delivery programs, developing the Seva Food Truck program in Fairfax County, voter registration events, vocational scholarships for students in need in Richmond, hosting faith-based youth leadership camps like Camp Akal Sahai in Prince William County, and performing other acts of service in the community; and

WHEREAS, the Sikh community focuses on congregation and learning through others, as well as displaying important religious acts that benefit the community, such as *Langar*, an open meal that guests of all races, religions, genders, and ages can attend; and

WHEREAS, the Sikh community stresses love, honor, and dignity, respect of all people, and awareness that divinity belongs in all individuals and beings; and

WHEREAS, the Sikh community in Northern Virginia has had a positive impact by stressing the importance of acts of *Seva* and consistently inviting all persons to be involved in an open and welcoming environment; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the Greater Sikh Community of Northern Virginia hereby be commended; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to Mansimran Kahlon on behalf of other members of the Greater Sikh Community of Northern Virginia as an expression of the House of Delegates' admiration for the many contributions of Sikhs to this region of the Commonwealth.

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