

21100875D

## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 566

Offered January 13, 2021

Prefiled January 13, 2021

*Memorializing the Congress of the United States to call on the Republic of India to repeal the Citizenship Amendment Act, to stop expansion of the National Register of Citizens, and to become a signatory to United Nations conventions on refugees.*

Patron—Samirah

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, on December 11, 2019, the Parliament of India passed the Citizenship Amendment Act, which for the first time established religion as a criterion for Indian citizenship; and

WHEREAS, while the Bharatiya Janata Party government, led by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, claims this policy will help refugees fleeing religious persecution from neighboring countries, it blatantly discriminates against citizenship on the basis of religion, favoring Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian immigrants, while excluding Muslim people; and

WHEREAS, the Republic of India has also declined to become a signatory to the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees; and

WHEREAS, in August 2019, Prime Minister Modi's government used the National Register of Citizens to force nearly two million people in the northeastern state of Assam to provide documentary evidence of their Indian citizenship or face detention at mass prisons and holding camps that the Indian government has since begun to build and populate; and

WHEREAS, the National Register of Citizens had previously only been updated in Assam, and a nationwide expansion of the program, used in conjunction with the Citizenship Amendment Act, could strip hundreds of millions of people, including a disproportionate number of Muslims, oppressed castes, women, indigenous people, and members of LGBTQ+ communities, of their citizenship rights with no option to be renaturalized; and

WHEREAS, protests in India against this policy have faced severe repression, with reports that police fired upon and killed demonstrators with live ammunition and arrested thousands of others in the state of Uttar Pradesh, as well as reports that police destroyed Muslim homes in several cities; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth of Virginia engages in significant trade, exchange, travel, and immigration with India and is home to numerous Muslim Americans of Indian origin; and

WHEREAS, the repressive and racist policies of Prime Minister Modi's government are inconsistent with Virginia's values as a Commonwealth that welcomes South Asian communities of all castes and religions; and

WHEREAS, South Asian communities, regardless of religion and caste, and people of many creeds and backgrounds throughout the Commonwealth have experienced distress and fear for loved ones and friends as a result of these policies; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Congress of the United States be urged to call on the Republic of India to repeal the Citizenship Amendment Act, to stop expansion of the National Register of Citizens, and to become a signatory to United Nations conventions on refugees; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of the Virginia Congressional Delegation so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia in this matter.

INTRODUCED

HJ566