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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 298

Offered January 11, 2017

Designating September 12, in 2017 and in each succeeding year, as the Saragarhi Day of Sikh Pride in Virginia.

Patron—Reeves

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, on September 12, 1897, the 21 soldiers of the 36th Sikh Regiment of the British Indian Army defending the Saragarhi communication post in the North Western Frontier Province of what is now Pakistan, were attacked by a force of between 10,000 and 14,000 Pashtun tribesmen; and

WHEREAS, outnumbered 500 to 1, but recognizing the importance of the outpost's mission to act as a heliographic signal relay between Fort Lockhart and Fort Gulistan, the Saragarhi defenders, under detachment commander Havildar Ishar Singh, unanimously decided to hold their position; and

WHEREAS, cut off from reinforcements by the approaching enemy, the Saragarhi defenders relied on their knowledge of the terrain and superior training and equipment to hold the outpost, which consisted of a small block building with ramparts and a signal tower; and

WHEREAS, between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., the Saragarhi defenders repulsed several charges by the enemy forces, including coordinated assaults from different angles, but sustained heavy casualties and ran perilously low on ammunition; and

WHEREAS, after another attempt to provide relief to the Saragarhi defenders failed, the tribesmen advanced under the cover of smoke from burning shrubs and grass, and the remaining defenders were forced to retreat behind the inner walls of the outpost; and

WHEREAS, Havildar Ishar Singh, who had been gravely wounded earlier in the battle, and two of his men charged the tribesmen to allow the other Saragarhi defenders to set up a new defensive position; their sacrifice inspired the remaining defenders, who engaged the enemy in hand-to-hand combat inside the fort; and

WHEREAS, at 3:30 p.m., the last Saragarhi defender, Sepoy Gurmukh Singh, requested permission from Fort Lockhart to abandon his post in the signal tower and join the battle; his request was granted; and

WHEREAS, the Saragarhi defenders held their post to the last man, and their inspirational bravery and dedication to duty in the face of overwhelming odds is celebrated by Sikhs and fellow soldiers throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, the Saragarhi defenders—Havildar Ishar Singh, Naik Lal Singh, Naik Chanda Singh, Lance Naik Sundar Singh, Lance Naik Ram Singh, Lance Naik Uttar Singh, Lance Naik Sahib Singh, Sepoy Hira Singh, Sepoy Daya Singh, Sepoy Jivan Singh, Sepoy Bhola Singh, Sepoy Narayan Singh, Sepoy Gurmukh Singh, Sepoy Jivan Singh, Sepoy Gurmukh Singh, Sepoy Ram Singh, Sepoy Bhagwan Singh, Sepoy Bhagwan Singh, Sepoy Buta Singh, Sepoy Jivan Singh, Sepoy Nand Singh—earned an indelible place in history by their valor, loyalty, and courageous sacrifice; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly designate September 12, in 2017 and in each succeeding year, as the Saragarhi Day of Sikh Pride in Virginia; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit a copy of this resolution to Puneet Ahluwalia so that members of the Sikh community 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.

INTRODUCED

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