

ASSEMBLY STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION No. 118

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 9, 2021

The Assembly State and Local Government Committee reports favorably Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 118.

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.

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 118 is identical to Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 118 of the 2020-2021 session.