

Date of Hearing: March 19, 2013

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Das Williams, Chair
ACR 20 (Logue and Perea) – As Introduced: February 20, 2013

SUBJECT: Postsecondary education: instruction in world religions: Sikhism.

SUMMARY: Recognizes the need for the inclusion of Sikhism in world religions, Eastern religions, Asian, and South Asian courses at all postsecondary educational institutions. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Makes numerous declarations and findings, including the following:
 - a) Guru Nanak (1469-1539) is the founder of Sikhism;
 - b) Sikhism originates from Northwestern India and is not a branch of any other religion;
 - c) Sikhs live in most countries and have Gurdwaras (place of worship) in 65 countries, including nine in the greater Sacramento region alone;
 - d) Approximately 750,000 Sikhs live in the United States; one-third of the Sikh population, approximately 250,000, live in California;
 - e) Sikhs wear turbans and as such are conspicuous and easy to spot; and,
 - f) Sikhs have suffered from a disproportionately high number of hate crimes post September 11, 2001 attacks.
- 2) Recognizes that the Sikh faith is the fifth largest world religion after Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.
- 3) Recognizes that the Sikh faith is the third largest monotheism, after Christianity and Islam.
- 4) Recognizes that Sikhism is not included in world religion courses at most postsecondary educational institutions.
- 5) Requests the Legislature to recognize the need for the inclusion of Sikhism in world religions, Eastern religions, Asian, and South Asian courses at all postsecondary educational institutions, including the University of California (UC), the California State University (CSU) and the California Community Colleges (CCC) systems.
- 6) Requests the Legislature to recommend to the governing bodies of the UC, CSU and CCC that they consider including Sikhism in their institutions' world religions, Eastern religions, Asian, and South Asian courses.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This resolution is keyed non-fiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS: Background. Post September 11, 2001 attacks (9/11), members of the Sikh community have suffered numerous instances of discrimination and religious attacks. According to the Sikh Coalition (Coalition), which promotes the rights of Sikhs in the United States, around 700 cases of violence and discrimination against Sikhs have been reported since 9/11. On August 5, 2012, several Sikhs in Oak Creek, Wisconsin were killed after their gurdwara was attacked. On April 11, 2011, two Sikhs were killed in Elk Grove, California as they went for an afternoon walk. A 2010 survey by the Coalition revealed that 69% of turban-wearing Sikh students living in the San Francisco area say they have been bullied because of the way they look.

Determination of instructional materials. Due to academic freedom, faculty of the UC, CSU and CCC have autonomy in the selection of instructional materials used to teach their individual courses.

Need for this bill. According to the Sacramento Region of Sikhs, there are approximately 24 million Sikhs worldwide; Sikhism is the third largest monotheism. However, most UC, CSU and CCC world religion courses do not include Sikhism. If the UC, CSU and CCC consider including Sikhism in their world religion courses, it will aid in educating more Californians about the culture, practices and traditions of the Sikhs.

Related legislation. ACR 25 (Wieckowski) designates November 2013 as Sikh American Awareness and Appreciation Month . This measure is awaiting action by the Legislature. ACR 97 (Perea), Resolution Chapter 60, Statutes of 2012, designated November 2012 as California Sikh American Awareness and Appreciation Month and recognized the contributions made by Californians of Sikh heritage. SCR 104 (Wolk), Resolution Chapter 122, Statutes of 2012, recognized October 13, 2012, as the 100-year anniversary of the Sikh American community, and called upon the people of California to commemorate the day with appropriate celebrations. AB 504 (Furutani, 2009), required the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training to create and make available to all law enforcement agencies a training component on how to recognize and interact with Sikhs carrying a kirpan (a religious article resembling a sword, which is integral to the practice of the Sikh faith. The kirpan is carried in a shoulder strap, as mandated by the Sikh Code of Conduct). This measure was vetoed by the Governor.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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