2015-K1221

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION celebrating the festival of Vaisakhi on April 13, 2016

WHEREAS, On April 13, 2016, members of the Sikh community are coming together in New York and around the world to celebrate Vaisakhi, one of the most important dates on the Sikh calendar; and

WHEREAS, Sikhism is the fifth-largest religion in the world, with more than 25 million adherents, including an estimated 700,000 in the United States; the majority of Sikhs live in the Punjab province of India, in the region where the religion was founded in the 15th Century by Guru Nanak Dev; and

WHEREAS, A monotheistic faith, Sikhism teaches respect for all people, regardless of race, religion, gender, or background; it stresses the importance of doing good in the world and demonstrating such positive values as humility, diligence, generosity, and self-sacrifice in daily life; and

WHEREAS, Vaisakhi celebrates the founding in 1699 of the devout Sikh fellowship known as the Khalsa; Guru Gobind Singh bestowed on all Khalsa men the surname Singh, meaning "lion," as a reminder to be courageous, and women accepted the surname Kaur, or "princess," to emphasize dignity; and

WHEREAS, The first Sikhs came to the United States in the 1890s to build railroads, work on California farms, or labor in the lumber mills of the Pacific Northwest; since then, Sikh Americans in all walks of life have contributed to the social, cultural, and economic vibrancy of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The State of New York and our Nation are blessed with many citizens of the Sikh community who are distinguished by their excellence and their contributions to all fields of endeavor; and

WHEREAS, The festival of Vaisakhi presents an ideal opportunity to affirm the belief in justice, equality, and freedom that is cherished by all Americans and by Sikhs the world over; now, therefore, be it RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to celebrate the festival of Vaisakhi, and to extend to all Sikh New Yorkers sincere best wishes for a meaningful and memorable observance.