

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 91

Introduced by Assembly Member Kalra

June 1, 2023

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 91—Relative to California Hindu American Awareness and Appreciation Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

ACR 91, as introduced, Kalra. California Hindu American Awareness and Appreciation Month.

This measure would designate the month of October 2023 as California Hindu American Awareness and Appreciation Month. The measure would also recognize and acknowledge the significant contributions made by Californians of Hindu heritage to the state and seek to increase awareness and understanding of the Hindu American community.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, California and the nation have been influenced by
- 2 the extraordinary cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity
- 3 of its residents; and
- 4 WHEREAS, There is an estimated one billion Hindus
- 5 worldwide, and approximately 2,230,000 Hindu Americans live
- 6 across the nation; and
- 7 WHEREAS, California is home to the largest Hindu American
- 8 population in the United States; and
- 9 WHEREAS, Hindu Americans in California represent diverse
- 10 ethnic backgrounds, including individuals of Indian, Pakistani,

1 Bangladeshi, Malaysian, Indonesian, Afghani, Nepali, Bhutanese,
2 Sri Lankan, Fijian, Caribbean, and European descent; and

3 WHEREAS, California and our nation have greatly benefited
4 from Hindu Americans, especially through the Vedanta philosophy,
5 Ayurvedic medicine, classical Indian art, dance, music, meditation,
6 yoga, literature, and community service; and

7 WHEREAS, The year 2023 marks the 130th anniversary of
8 when Hinduism was officially introduced to the United States by
9 Swami Vivekananda in 1893 at the World's Parliament of
10 Religions in the City of Chicago, and the 123rd anniversary of
11 when he founded the Vedanta Society in the City of San Francisco,
12 California, in 1900; and

13 WHEREAS, Hindus are primarily an immigrant community
14 and first started immigrating to California and the United States
15 in the early 1900s, and came in increasing numbers after the lifting
16 of the Asian Exclusion Act of 1924 in 1943 and the abolishment
17 of quotas for immigrants based on national origin in 1965; and

18 WHEREAS, Most Hindu immigrants have come to the United
19 States as students, in search of better economic opportunities, or
20 to unite with family members, while others have arrived in this
21 country after facing religious persecution in their countries of
22 origin; and

23 WHEREAS, Hindu Americans and the Vedanta philosophy
24 have significantly influenced notable intellectuals such as President
25 John Adams, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt
26 Whitman, J.D. Salinger, Christopher Isherwood, Aldous Huxley,
27 Huston Smith, and Joseph Campbell; and

28 WHEREAS, The first Hindu temple in the United States was
29 built in San Francisco, California, and at the dedication of the
30 temple on January 7, 1906, it was proclaimed to be the "First Hindu
31 Temple in the Whole Western World"; and

32 WHEREAS, There are now over 120 Hindu temples, religious
33 centers, and cultural centers throughout California, and the greater
34 bay area is home to over 40 of those temples and centers; and

35 WHEREAS, Hindu Americans have greatly enriched
36 California's higher education university systems by teaching
37 numerous students, especially in the academic fields of
38 astrophysics, computer science, engineering, law, planetary science,
39 psychology, and neuroscience, and a majority of Hindu Americans
40 are in high-skill occupations; and

WHEREAS, Seventy-seven percent of Hindu American adults have a college degree and nearly 50 percent of Hindu American adults have a postgraduate degree, according to the Pew Research Center; and

WHEREAS, Hindu Americans share the entrepreneurial spirit of America and contribute to California's economic vitality, having been pioneers and leaders in Silicon Valley and founding several of its early startups. Hindu Americans are estimated to be employed in 40 percent of startups in Silicon Valley; and

WHEREAS, Hindu Americans have also contributed to many of California's economic sectors and have particularly excelled in the areas of business, law, politics, information technology, medicine, and science; and

WHEREAS, Hindu Americans now serve in various levels of government across the state and nation, including four Members in the United States House of Representatives; and

WHEREAS, California Hindu temples, organizations, and individuals actively engage in seva, a Sanskrit word for selfless service, towards their fellow human beings through charity, public service, and the provision of free medical and legal services; and

WHEREAS, Ahimsa, which is the Sanskrit word for noninjury or nonviolence, is a central principle for Hindu Americans in California, and it provides the ethical foundation for vegetarianism, environmentalism, and harmonious living; and

WHEREAS, Hindu Americans in cities throughout California celebrate numerous holidays and festivals, such as Diwali, which celebrates the victory of good over evil and knowledge over ignorance; and

WHEREAS, Hindu Americans promote the ideals of tolerance, pluralism, and religious freedom, which are inherent in their beliefs and respect the diversity of all faiths, and the Vedas, the 5,000-year-old texts of Hindu Americans, provide the basis for these core principles: "Truth is one, the wise call it by many names" (Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti); and

WHEREAS, Despite their positive contributions to California and this nation, Hindu Americans face stereotypes and misconceptions about their heritage and have been the targets of bullying, discrimination, hate speech, and bias-motivated crimes; and

1 WHEREAS, Hindu American religious symbols have been
2 misunderstood, including the sacred swastika, which translates to
3 “all is well” in Sanskrit and has been used in religious observances
4 for over 4,000 years; and

5 WHEREAS, Many Hindus and their families in California and
6 the United States face an uncertain future in this country due to
7 inequitable immigration policies and decades-long backlogs for
8 green cards; and

9 WHEREAS, In June 2021, the Understanding Hinduphobia
10 Initiative developed a working definition of Hinduphobia as “a set
11 of antagonistic, destructive, and derogatory attitudes and behaviors
12 towards Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism) and Hindus that may
13 manifest as prejudice, fear, or hatred”; and

14 WHEREAS, There have been documented instances of
15 anti-Hindu hate crimes against Hindu Americans over the last few
16 decades in many parts of the country, especially on college
17 campuses, in parallel with the rise of Hinduphobia; and

18 WHEREAS, According to the Federal Bureau of Investigations
19 Hate Crimes Statistics Report, crimes targeting Hindu Americans
20 are on the rise; and

21 WHEREAS, In July 2022, a report released by Rutgers
22 University titled “Anti-Hindu Disinformation: A Case Study of
23 Hinduphobia on Social Media” detailed how hate messages in
24 social media translate into real-life threats for people of the Hindu
25 faith; and

26 WHEREAS, One in three Hindu American students reported
27 that they have been bullied in school for their religious beliefs
28 according to the Hindu American Foundation’s 2015 study on
29 bullying and bias against Hindu students; and

30 WHEREAS, Hinduphobia is exacerbated and institutionalized
31 by some in academia who support the dismantling of Hinduism
32 and accuse its sacred texts and cultural practices of violence and
33 oppression; now, therefore, be it

34 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
35 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature hereby designates the
36 month of October 2023 as California Hindu American Awareness
37 and Appreciation Month; and be it further

38 *Resolved*, That the Legislature recognizes and acknowledges
39 the significant contributions made by Californians of Hindu
40 heritage to our state, and by adoption of this resolution, seeks to

- 1 increase awareness and understanding of the Hindu American
- 2 community; and be it further
- 3 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
- 4 of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

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