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SR-84 (2023-2024)

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ENROLLED APRIL 17, 2024

PASSED IN SENATE APRIL 15, 2024

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2023–2024 REGULAR SESSION

SENATE RESOLUTION

NO. 84

Introduced by Senator Gonzalez
(Coauthor: Senator Min)

April 01, 2024

Relative to Khmer New Year.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SR 84, Gonzalez.

WHEREAS, The Cambodian people have a long and rich cultural heritage symbolized by Angkor Wat, the temple city, which flourished during the Khmer Empire from the 9th to the 12th centuries and was considered one of the Wonders of the Ancient World, and now stands as a living icon of the endurance and genius of all Cambodians throughout the world; and

WHEREAS, Khmer New Year, or Cambodian New Year, also known as Choul Chnam Thmey, literally meaning “Enter the New Year,” also known as Maha Sangkranta, literally meaning “Great Sankranti,” or Sangkranta, is the traditional celebration of the solar new year in Cambodia; and

WHEREAS, Maha Sangkranta or Sangkranta, derived from Sanskrit saṅkrānti, is the name of the first day of the New Year celebration. It marks the end of the year and the beginning of a new one. People dress up, light candles, and burn incense sticks at shrines, where the members of each family offer thanks for the Buddha’s teachings by bowing or kneeling three times in front of his image. For good luck, people wash their face with holy water in the morning, their chests at noon, and their feet in the evening before they go to bed; and

WHEREAS, Veareak Vanabat is the name of the second day of the New Year celebration. People contribute charity to the less fortunate by helping individuals experiencing homelessness and low-income families, among others. Families attend a dedication ceremony for their ancestors at monasteries; and

WHEREAS, Veareak Laeung Sak is the name of the third day of the New Year celebration. Buddhists wash the Buddha statues and their elders with perfumed water. Bathing the Buddha is a symbolic practice to wash bad actions away. This ritualistic act is called Srang Preah. It is also thought to be a kind deed that will bring longevity, good luck, happiness, and prosperity in life. By washing their grandparents and parents, the children can obtain from them best wishes, blessings, and good pieces of advice for the rest of the year; and

WHEREAS, In temples, people erect a sand hillock on temple grounds. They mound up a big, pointed hill of sand or dome in the center to represent Valuka Chaitya, the stupa (shrine) at the Tāvātimsa (heaven) where they believe the Buddha's hair and diadem are kept. The big stupa is surrounded by four small ones, that represent the stupas of the Buddha's favorite disciples: Sariputta, Moggallana, Ananda, and Maha Kassapa; and

WHEREAS, Cambodia is home to a variety of traditional games played to transform the days into memorable occasions. These games are similar to those played in Manipur, a state in northeastern India. Throughout the Khmer New Year, street corners often are crowded with friends and families enjoying a break from routine, filling their free time with dancing and popular games. Typically, Khmer games help maintain one's mental and physical dexterity, and develop good rapport among members of the community; and

WHEREAS, The Khmer New Year coincides with the traditional solar new year in several parts of India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand; and

WHEREAS, A three-day public holiday marks the New Year, which usually starts on April 13 or April 14, at the end of the harvest season when farmers enjoy the fruits of their labor before the rainy season begins; and

WHEREAS, Khmers living abroad may choose to celebrate during a weekend rather than specifically April 13 through April 16; and

WHEREAS, The State of California has a large population of Cambodians and the City of Long Beach is known around the world as home to the largest Cambodian community outside of Southeast Asia; and

WHEREAS, The Cambodian people have contributed to communities by participating in American politics, by establishing local and international businesses, by developing new art forms and community organizations through their rich cultural heritage, and by raising a new generation of Americans with promise to advance the future of the State of California and the nation; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, That the Senate hereby recognizes April 13 to April 16, 2024, inclusive, as Khmer New Year, and calls upon all Californians to observe the New Year by participating in appropriate activities and programs; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.