

CITY OF SEATTLE

RESOLUTION 31983

A RESOLUTION expressing the Seattle City Council’s solidarity with farmers protesting the passage of farming bills in India and in support of affected members of Seattle’s South Asian community.

WHEREAS, the State of Washington remains a proud farming community; and

WHEREAS, the State of Washington understands and respects the contributions of farmers in feeding nations; and

WHEREAS, the State of Washington is home to thousands of farmers who still own farmland in their ancestral countries; and

WHEREAS, the Indian government proposed and passed bills in September 2020 to deregulate the sale of crops in India, by dismantling minimum support prices for crops, removing restrictions on purchase of land by corporations, and removing limits on stockpiling commodities; and

WHEREAS, these laws set off protests across north India, particularly in the states of Punjab and Haryana, and resulted in tens of thousands of farmers protesting and blocking traffic outside the capital city of New Delhi in November 2020; and

WHEREAS, the government of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been criticized for silencing religious minorities, including Sikhs, and these policies will likely have negative impacts on food and economic security in Punjab; and

WHEREAS, these bills continue the Modi government’s policies, described in City of Seattle Resolution 31926, against which unions and individuals have protested with strikes and demonstrations in rural communities against the oppression and exploitation of farmers; and

1 WHEREAS, these bills have religion- and caste-specific impacts; and

2 WHEREAS, most Sikhs live in Punjab and most Punjabi Sikhs are owners and laborers on

3 agricultural lands; and

4 WHEREAS, inequitable agricultural policies have driven many farmers to try and earn a living

5 abroad, including in Seattle and Washington State, to support their families back home;

6 and

7 WHEREAS, Dalit laborers continue to suffer from governmental oppression as well as abuse and

8 harassment within farming communities, many of which have deeply embedded

9 casteism; and

10 WHEREAS, the passage of these bills will result in the privatization of farmers markets in India

11 and will adversely affect the financial situation of those in Seattle's South Asian

12 community as well as many other Washingtonians and their families back home; and

13 WHEREAS, India's agriculture sector contributes nearly 15 percent of India's \$2.9 trillion

14 economy but employs nearly half of the country's 1.3 billion people; and

15 WHEREAS, 86 percent of Indian farmers own only two or fewer acres of farmland with an

16 average income of \$1,400 per year, and do not have the means to bargain with large,

17 private corporations; and

18 WHEREAS, anti-farmer policies, debt, and a deteriorating financial status have led to 363,726

19 farmers and farm laborers committing suicide between 1995 and 2019; and

20 WHEREAS, farmers have the right to demonstrate peacefully and the City Council condemns

21 any police brutality; and

22 WHEREAS, numerous rallies have recently taken place across the State of Washington

23 protesting the bills; and

1 WHEREAS, the City Council has long recognized and stood with diverse communities whose
2 families have faced hardship abroad; NOW, THEREFORE,

3 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE THAT:**

4 Section 1. The City of Seattle stands in solidarity with those residents in the State of
5 Washington and in Seattle and their families who have been directly affected by the farming bills
6 passed in India.

7 Section 2. The Seattle City Council requests that our elected officials representing Seattle
8 at the federal level, currently U.S. Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell and U.S.
9 Representatives Pramila Jayapal and Adam Smith, support these farmers and object to any
10 retaliation or police brutality against them.

1 Adopted by the City Council the 14th day of December, 2020,

2 and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this 14th day of

3 December, 2020.



4 _____
5 President _____ of the City Council

6 Filed by me this 14th day of December, 2020.



7 _____
8 Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

9 (Seal)