



Legislation Text

File #: Res 31983, Version: 1

CITY OF SEATTLE

RESOLUTION _____

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

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

WHEREAS, most Sikhs live in Punjab and most Punjabi Sikhs are owners and laborers on agricultural lands;
and

WHEREAS, inequitable agricultural policies have driven many farmers to try and earn a living abroad,
including in Seattle and Washington State, to support their families back home; and

WHEREAS, Dalit laborers continue to suffer from governmental oppression as well as abuse and harassment
within farming communities, many of which have deeply embedded casteism; and

WHEREAS, the passage of these bills will result in the privatization of farmers markets in India and will
adversely affect the financial situation of those in Seattle's South Asian community as well as many
other Washingtonians and their families back home; and

WHEREAS, India's agriculture sector contributes nearly 15 percent of India's \$2.9 trillion economy but
employs nearly half of the country's 1.3 billion people; and

WHEREAS, 86 percent of Indian farmers own only two or fewer acres of farmland with an average income of
\$1,400 per year, and do not have the means to bargain with large, private corporations; and

WHEREAS, anti-farmer policies, debt, and a deteriorating financial status have led to 363,726 farmers and
farm laborers committing suicide between 1995 and 2019; and

WHEREAS, farmers have the right to demonstrate peacefully and the City Council condemns any police
brutality; and

WHEREAS, numerous rallies have recently taken place across the State of Washington protesting the bills; and

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

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

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

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

Adopted by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2020, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this _____ day of _____, 2020.

President _____ of the City Council

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2020.

Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

(Seal)