



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING THE CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ASSYRIAN NEW YEAR

WHEREAS, the day of April 1 annually is celebrated as the Assyrian New Year, also known as Kha b'Nissan or Akitu. The Assyrian New Year is not only the first day of the new year but also marks the start of spring and serves as a symbol of revival; and

WHEREAS, according to the Assyrian Policy Institute, more than 600,000 Assyrian Americans live in the United States. Illinois is home to more than 80,000 Assyrian Americans, the vast majority of whom live in Cook County; and

WHEREAS, Assyrians are a transnational ethnic group indigenous to parts of northern Iraq, northwestern Iran, southeastern Turkey, and northeast Syria. They form a distinctive community, united through ethnicity, language, and a culture that constitutes one of the oldest continuous traditions in the world. In their various countries of origin, the governing authorities historically infringed on the cultural and linguistic rights of Assyrians and prohibited public celebrations of the Assyrian New Year; and

WHEREAS, Assyrians began emigrating to Illinois in the late 1800s. The earliest immigrants settled in the River North area. Their population later moved north, first to Lincoln Park and Lake View and later to Uptown and Edgewater. Migration and resettlement of Assyrians from Iraq and Syria intensified in recent years due to the conflict and sectarian violence targeting Assyrians culminating with the rise of ISIS in 2014; and

WHEREAS, Assyrian Americans work for and contribute to Cook County in numerous ways. At Cook County, we are proud to have Assyrian American public servants, and a growing number of local Assyrian American local elected officials across the state.

WHEREAS, Assyrians have also made important contributions to the social and cultural fabric of our communities. The iconic London House in Chicago was designed by Assyrian-American architect Eva Toma. The Pentagon Memorial honoring 9/11 victims in Washington, D.C. was built by Abe Yousif, an Assyrian American from Elk Grove Village. Chicago's famous Pizza Puff was invented by Elisha Shabaz, an Assyrian American who immigrated to the U.S. from Iran in 1898; and

WHEREAS, the Cook County Board recognizes the cultural importance and history surrounding the observance of the Assyrian New Year for Assyrian Americans and joins the Assyrian-American community across Illinois in celebrating year 6774 of the Assyrian New Year; and

WHEREAS, Assyrian Americans are a part of the Middle Eastern and North African MENA community. Cook County is working to advance inclusion around the collection of MENA American data; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that, the Board of Commissioners of Cook County, on behalf of the 5.2 million residents of Cook County expresses its appreciation for the vibrancy, tenacity, and contributions of the Assyrian American community and wishes all who observe this holiday a healthy and prosperous new year.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, a suitable copy of this Resolution be spread upon the official

proceedings of this Honorable Body and that an official copy of same be tendered to The Assyrian Policy Institute and The Assyrian National Council of Illinois.