



HR0288

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1 HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, April 17, 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the  
3 beginning of the Cambodian Genocide, a period of devastating  
4 violence during which nearly two million people, more than a  
5 quarter of Cambodia's population, lost their lives under the  
6 Khmer Rouge regime through mass executions, forced labor,  
7 starvation, and disease; and

8 WHEREAS, In the aftermath of this genocide, the United  
9 States became a refuge for tens of thousands of Cambodian  
10 survivors and their families, many of whom resettled in  
11 Illinois and contributed to building one of the largest  
12 Cambodian American communities in the Midwest; and

13 WHEREAS, Illinois became the first state in the nation to  
14 formally recognize the Cambodian Genocide with an annual Day  
15 of Remembrance on April 17, reflecting a strong commitment to  
16 human rights, historical justice, and the healing of survivors  
17 and their descendants; and

18 WHEREAS, The National Cambodian Heritage Museum and  
19 Killing Fields Memorial, located in Chicago, is the first  
20 museum of its kind in the United States; it stands as a solemn  
21 space for remembrance and education while honoring the  
22 strength and resilience of survivors; it also serves as a

1 dynamic cultural institution committed to storytelling, the  
2 arts, and healing; its permanent exhibit was developed in  
3 collaboration with acclaimed Cambodian American  
4 interdisciplinary artist Anida Yoeu Ali, whose work brings  
5 survivor narratives to life with authenticity, depth, and  
6 dignity; and

7 WHEREAS, Cambodian American artists and cultural leaders  
8 have been essential in preserving and evolving Cambodian  
9 heritage; Master Yary Livan, a master ceramicist, has taught  
10 generations of students the sacred traditions of Khmer  
11 ceramics, ensuring the survival of this ancient art form  
12 through education and community practice; and

13 WHEREAS, Visual artists, such as Narath Tan and Monirith  
14 Chhea, explore complex themes of identity, memory,  
15 displacement, and justice, enriching public understanding of  
16 the Cambodian American experience and the legacy of genocide;  
17 and

18 WHEREAS, Cambodian classical dance remains a powerful  
19 medium of cultural storytelling; Charya Burt, a master dancer  
20 and choreographer, has preserved and revitalized this art  
21 through performance, teaching, and community-based  
22 storytelling that bridges generations; and

1       WHEREAS, The documentary, The Healing Circle: Songs,  
2       Stories, and Friendship, directed by Chicago-based Cambodian  
3       American filmmaker Thavary Krouch, uplifts the voices of  
4       Cambodian women in Illinois who use storytelling and music as  
5       tools for healing, remembrance, and self-expression; one  
6       participant reflects, "Through storytelling and music, I found  
7       a way to connect with my past and heal the wounds that words  
8       alone couldn't reach"; and

9       WHEREAS, Education about the Cambodian Genocide continues  
10      to grow across Illinois public schools due to the tireless  
11      advocacy of leaders such as Laura Ouk, who has championed  
12      inclusive, survivor-informed genocide curriculum and public  
13      awareness; and

14      WHEREAS, The Cambodian Association of Illinois has been a  
15      cornerstone of the community since its founding, with  
16      co-founder Kompha Seth playing a key role in establishing  
17      critical programs that serve survivors and preserve Cambodian  
18      heritage and culture; and

19      WHEREAS, Cambodian Americans in Illinois have become civic  
20      leaders, artists, educators, entrepreneurs, and public  
21      servants; among them is Khemarey "Khem" Khoeun, who made  
22      history as the first Cambodian American woman elected to  
23      public office in the United States and served the Village of

1 Skokie with distinction and dedication to inclusive  
2 governance; and

3 WHEREAS, Cambodian Americans throughout Illinois continue  
4 to enrich the state through invaluable contributions in  
5 education, the arts, healthcare, business, and public service;  
6 therefore, be it

7 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE  
8 HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
9 we solemnly commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Cambodian  
10 Genocide, honor the memory of the victims, and recognize the  
11 strength, resilience, and enduring contributions of the  
12 Cambodian American community in Illinois and beyond; and be it  
13 further

14 RESOLVED, That we celebrate the work of artists,  
15 educators, and cultural leaders, including Anida Yoeu Ali,  
16 Master Yary Livan, Narath Tan, Monirith Chhea, and Charya  
17 Burt, who continue to shape a living legacy of remembrance,  
18 cultural identity, and healing; and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That we honor the advocacy of Laura Ouk, the  
20 community leadership of Kompha Seth, and the historic public  
21 service of Khemarey Khoeun whose contributions exemplify the  
22 Cambodian American community's commitment to justice, healing,

1 and equity; and be it further

2       RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be  
3 presented to the Cambodian Association of Illinois, the  
4 National Cambodian Heritage Museum and Killing Fields  
5 Memorial, and all named individuals as a symbol of deep  
6 respect, remembrance, and solidarity.