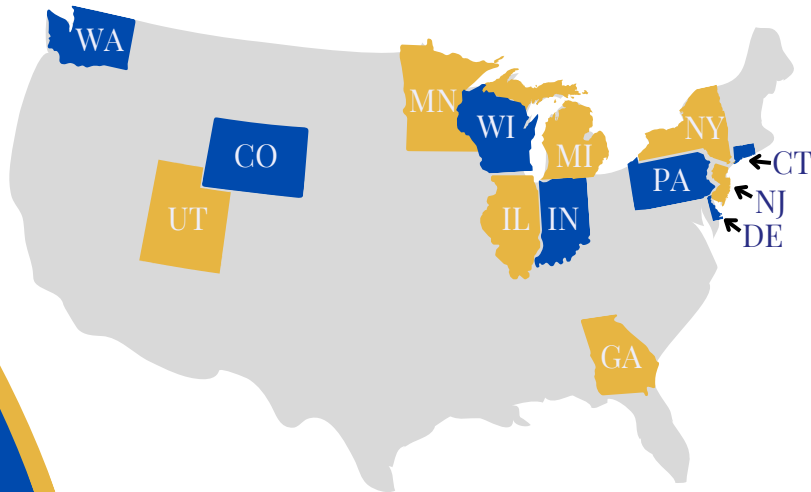


# April is Sikh Heritage Month

April is Sikh Heritage and Awareness Month when we celebrate the rich history, achievements, and contributions of the vibrant Sikh communities across the United States. While Sikhi is the 5th largest organized religion in the world, Sikhs face widespread misunderstanding about their religion, culture, and identity. This month, learn more about Sikhi, celebrate Sikhs in your community, and increase awareness of the Sikh tradition and culture.



*Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin all recognize April as Sikh Awareness Month. Many additional cities and towns recognize Sikh Heritage Month.*

“It is altogether fitting and proper to celebrate the day of Vaisakhi alongside Sikhs throughout the world and to honor the lasting contributions made by the Sikh community to the United States”

House Resolution 275 To Designate April 14 as National Sikh Day  
*introduced on April 3, 2023*

## Why April?

April has been chosen for Sikh Awareness month because Vaisakhi, one of the most important celebrations in Sikhi, falls on April 14th. Some states, such as California, celebrate Sikh Awareness month in November, which coincides with the birth of the founder of Sikhi, Guru Nanak.



# April is Sikh Heritage Month



## What is Vaisakhi?

Vaisakhi (va-SAH-khee) commemorates the creation of the Khalsa, the community of initiated Sikhs, and the establishment of many of the defining aspects of Sikh identity, including the names Singh and Kaur and the 5Ks, which include not cutting one's hair (kes) and wearing a kara (steel bracelet), and kirpan (a small sword or dagger).

Vaisakhi was originally celebrated as a spring harvest festival in Punjab, in Northern India. The festival became significant in Sikhi in 1699 when Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Sikh guru, established the Khalsa, the community of initiated Sikhs who adhere to specific code of conduct. Vaisakhi is celebrated on April 14 or 15 every year.

## How is Vaisakhi celebrated?

Sikhs celebrate Vaisakhi with a visit to the gurdwara (Sikh house of worship). Many communities hold parades and celebrations featuring music and singing hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh holy book), dancing, and demonstrations of Gatka, a Sikh martial art. Langar, a free meal open to everyone, is also an important part of the celebration.

*"My favorite part of Vaisakhi is going to the gurdwara, eating langar, and reminiscing on the legacy of the Sikh community with loved ones."*

*-Harsirat Kaur, KF Fellow*



## What else is essential to know about Sikhi?

- There are more than 25 million Sikhs worldwide and over 500,000 Sikhs in the United States.
- Sikhi was founded in the 15th century CE in the Punjab region of Northern India.
- Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, taught equality of all people, honesty, hard work, and service to others.
- Sikhi is a monotheistic religion; there is one Creator, considered formless and eternal.
- Sikhs first came to the United States in the 1890s. Today, the largest Sikh communities in the U.S. are in California, New York, and New Jersey.
- 99% of people wearing a turban in the U.S. are Sikhs.

## How to celebrate Sikh Awareness Month?

- Create a display of Sikh books in your library or classroom
- Teach a lesson or give a presentation about Sikhi and Sikhs in the U.S.
- Plan a visit to your local gurdwara
- Ask your local representatives to support the recognition of Sikh Awareness month in your state or city

