

Colorado State Senator Williams

Introduces Genocide Resolution, SJR12-046

<http://www.care2.com/causes/colorado-native-american-history-an-atrocity-not-genocide.html#ixzz21Wgf9pIg>

Last week, the Colorado legislature passed resolutions condemning the genocide of Jewish, Armenian and Sudanese people.

But after a marathon session tossing around numerous terms, the legislators failed to apply 'genocide' to America's treatment of its Native people; they picked 'atrocities' instead.

State Senator Suzanne Williams, a member of the Comanche Nation who pushed a resolution on Native genocide [PDF], told Indian Country Today:

"Every year the Senate and House legislators acknowledge the holocaust and genocide of Jewish people and we also acknowledge the genocide of Armenian people. But it's important to acknowledge the first genocide on our own land — the genocide of American Indians."

Williams said the resolution was to "look at history from the Indian point of view."

She expected a "positive reception" from the current legislature, although she thought the measure might "hit too close to home." She was right.

According to Indian Country Today, Colorado legislators went through amendment after amendment before settling on 'atrocities.' Some objected to 'genocide' because Native Americans were not literally annihilated. Williams was forced to point out that neither were the Jews or the Armenians.

According to Ward Churchill, a professor of ethnic studies at the University of Colorado, the reduction of the North American Indian population from an estimated 12 million in 1500 to barely 237,000 in 1900 represents a "vast genocide ... the most sustained on record."

Using arguments reminiscent of that surrounding the genocide of Armenians by Turkey a century ago, some legislators objected to the resolution's focus on the past, its "negative" nature, and the way in which, they charged, it seemed to blame the U.S. government although the government apparently lacked a Hitler-type leader to instigate a policy of widespread massacre. One Senator said there were "many wrongs" against America's first people, but also "many blessings."

Williams pointed out that there had been an extermination plan, executed in the Trail of Tears, the Sand Creek Massacre, and Native exile to barren lands. She quoted Thomas Jefferson as saying "the American Indian has justified his own extermination."

The crime of genocide is defined in international law in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. Part of that Convention reads:

Article II: In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

When passed April 20, remaining in the resolution's language was that "settlers on many (but not all) occasions treated the indigenous population of North America with cruelty and inhumanity." It also cites broken treaties, the demonization of Native Americans and other depredations, and it called on the General Assembly to recognize the millions of Native deaths that resulted from the European invasion.

Senator Williams Genocide Resolution as Introduced, SJR12-046

Second Regular Session

Sixty-eighth General Assembly

STATE OF COLORADO

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. R12-0947.01 Cara Meeker x4636 **SJR12-046**

Senate Committees House Committees

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 12-046

**101 CONCERNING THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN
102 GENOCIDE AND THE DESIGNATION OF NOVEMBER 2012 AS FIRST
103 NATION APPRECIATION MONTH IN THE STATE OF COLORADO.**

1 WHEREAS, American Indians were the original inhabitants of the
2 lands that now constitute the United States and thus played a unique role
3 in the shaping of our nation's history and culture; and

4 WHEREAS, The story of American Indians in our country is a
5 record of endurance, survival, adaptation, and creativity in the face of
6 overwhelming obstacles; and

7 WHEREAS, Many people of European descent are unaware of the
8 catastrophe that indigenous peoples of America endured as a result of the
9 arrival of Europeans on the North American landmass; and

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Williams S.,

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Kefalas,

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.

Capital letters indicate new material to be added to existing statute.

Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.

1 WHEREAS, Demographers estimate that there were 18 million
2 indigenous people in North America north of the Rio Grande in the last
3 decade of the 15th century; and

4 WHEREAS, As of the 2010 United States Census, the American
5 Indian population has been reduced to 1.7% of the entire United States
6 population; and

7 WHEREAS, Many American Indian deaths were caused
8 intentionally or because of disease, which was intensified by volitional
9 acts of cruelty, such as forced migrations, deprivation of nutrition, and
10 enslavement; and

11 WHEREAS, American Indians have endured many hardships at
12 the hands of early settlers and their descendants; and

13 WHEREAS, The vast majority of the Cherokee Nation, comprised
14 of some 28,000 people, were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands
15 in Georgia by the United States Army at the direction of President Van
16 Buren and made to march nearly 1,200 miles during the brutal winter of
17 1838-39, resulting in the deaths of approximately 4,000 Cherokees; and

18 WHEREAS, In 1864, a group of roughly 800 American Indians
19 encamped at Sand Creek in southeastern Colorado, believing themselves
20 to be under the protection of the United States government, were brutally
21 attacked by Colorado Territory militia, who killed between 150 and 200
22 people, mostly elderly men, women, and children; and

23 WHEREAS, Numerous treaties were made between the American
24 government and various American Indian nations, and the vast majority
25 of these treaties were broken by the American government; and

26 WHEREAS, The Colorado General Assembly has recognized and
27 memorialized the victims of genocide in Europe against the Jews, in the
28 Middle East against the Armenians, and in Africa against the Sudanese;
29 and

30 WHEREAS, A common element in genocide is the creation of a
31 myth that the victims are in some way not part of the human family; and

32 WHEREAS, This element was present in the treatment of the
-2- SJR12-046

1 American Indians on their own native land; and

2 WHEREAS, Despite such traumatic suffering, American Indians
3 have made distinct and important contributions to the United States
4 through art, culture, strength and spirit, vibrant customs and celebrations,
5 a sense of history, and a sense of purpose, all of which enliven and enrich
6 our nation; and

7 WHEREAS, American Indian societies exhibited a deep respect
8 for the earth and its resources, and such values are widely held today; and

9 WHEREAS, American Indians have served with valor in every
10 American conflict, from the Revolutionary War to the contributions of the
11 Navajo Code Talkers of World War II to the war against terrorism and
12 Operation Enduring Freedom; and

13 WHEREAS, In honor of the service and sacrifice of the First
14 Nation peoples; now, therefore,
15 *Be It Resolved by the Senate of the Sixty-eighth General Assembly*
16 *of the State of Colorado, the House of Representatives concurring herein:*
17 (1) That we, the members of the General Assembly, express our
18 grief and recognition of the millions of deaths of First Nation peoples as
19 a result of North American settlement; and
20 (2) That we acknowledge that early American settlers on many
21 occasions treated the indigenous population of North America with
22 cruelty and inhumanity and that our federal government dealt unfairly
23 with the American Indians; and
24 (3) That we urge all Americans to recognize and celebrate the
25 enduring and enriching contributions and culture of our First Nation
26 peoples; and
27 (4) That November 2012 be recognized as First Nation
28 appreciation month in the state of Colorado.
29 *Be It Further Resolved,* That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent
30 to Governor John Hickenlooper, Lieutenant Governor Joe Garcia, Senator
31 Mark Udall, Senator Michael Bennet, Colorado's congressional
32 delegation, the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, Executive
-3- SJR12-046
1 Secretary of Indian Affairs Ernest House, Jr., and the Chairmen of the
2 Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribes.
-4- SJR12-046

Senator Williams Genocide Resolution as Amended and Passed,
SJR12-046

SENATE

Final Reading
April 20, 2012
Second Regular Session
Sixty-eighth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO
ENGROSSED

LLS NO. R12-0947.01 Cara Meeker x4636 SJR12-046
SENATE SPONSORSHIP
Williams S.,

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Kefalas,

Senate Committees
House Committees

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 12-046
Concerning the remembrance of the American Indian
atrocities and the designation of November 2012 as First
Nation appreciation month in the state of Colorado.

WHEREAS, American Indians were the original inhabitants of the lands that now constitute the United States and thus played a unique role in the shaping of our nation's history and culture; and

WHEREAS, The story of American Indians in our country is a record of endurance, survival, adaptation, and creativity in the face of overwhelming obstacles; and

WHEREAS, Many people of European descent are unaware of the catastrophe that indigenous peoples of America endured as a result of the arrival of Europeans on the North American landmass; and

WHEREAS, Demographers estimate that there were 18 million indigenous people in North America north of the Rio Grande in the last decade of the 15th century; and

WHEREAS, As of the 2010 United States Census, the American Indian population has been reduced to 1.7% of the entire United States population; and

WHEREAS, Many American Indian deaths were caused because of disease, which was intensified by acts of cruelty, such as forced migrations, deprivation of nutrition, and enslavement; and

WHEREAS, American Indians have endured many hardships at the hands of early settlers and their descendants; and

WHEREAS, The vast majority of the Cherokee Nation, comprised of some 28,000 people, were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands in Georgia by the United States Army at the direction of President Van Buren and made to march nearly 1,200 miles during the brutal winter of 1838-39, resulting in the deaths of approximately 4,000 Cherokees; and

WHEREAS, In 1864, a group of roughly 800 American Indians encamped at Sand Creek in southeastern Colorado, believing themselves to be under the protection of the United States government, were brutally attacked by Colorado Territory militia, who killed between 150 and 200 people, mostly elderly men, women, and children; and

WHEREAS, Numerous treaties were made between the American government and various American Indian nations, and the vast majority of these treaties were broken by the American government; and

WHEREAS, Despite such traumatic suffering, American Indians have made distinct and important contributions to the United States through art, culture, strength and spirit, vibrant customs and celebrations, a sense of history, and a sense of purpose, all of which enliven and enrich our nation; and

WHEREAS, American Indian societies exhibited a deep respect for the earth and its resources, and such values are widely held today; and

WHEREAS, American Indians have served with valor in every American conflict, from the Revolutionary War to the contributions of the Navajo Code Talkers of World War II to the war against terrorism and Operation Enduring Freedom; and

WHEREAS, In honor of the service and sacrifice of the First Nation peoples; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the Senate of the Sixty-eighth General Assembly of the State of Colorado, the House of Representatives concurring herein:

(1) That we, the members of the General Assembly, express our grief and recognition of the millions of deaths of First Nation peoples as a result of North American settlement; and

(2) That we acknowledge that early American settlers on many, but not all, occasions treated the indigenous population of North America with cruelty and inhumanity and that our federal government dealt unfairly with the American Indians; and

(3) That the federal government has made reparations to American Indian people and talks continue today about paying reparations.

Colorado's congressional delegation has brought legislation to support native students tuition across this country.

(4) That we urge all Americans to recognize and celebrate the enduring and enriching contributions and culture of our First Nation peoples; and

(5) That November 2012 be recognized as First Nation appreciation month in the state of Colorado.

Be It Further Resolved, That copies of this Joint Resolution be sent to Governor John Hickenlooper, Lieutenant Governor Joe Garcia, Senator Mark Udall, Senator Michael Bennet, Colorado's congressional delegation, the Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs, Executive Secretary of Indian Affairs Ernest House, Jr., and the Chairmen of the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribes.