

REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

DATE: February 9, 2021

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections & Intergovernmental Relations Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso *Avania Sobalvarro - rg For*
Chief Legislative Analyst

Council File No: 21-0002-S25
Assignment No: 21-01-0048

SUBJECT: Resolution (Rodriguez – Raman) to SUPPORT action to oppose agricultural laws passed by India which exploit agrarian communities

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Resolution (Rodriguez – Raman) to include in the City’s 2021-2022 Federal Legislative Program, SUPPORT for any administrative or legislative action by the United States government to oppose the agricultural laws passed by the government of India in September 2020 which exploit agrarian communities in India, as described in the text of the Resolution.

SUMMARY

The Resolution (Rodriguez – Raman), introduced January 12, 2021, advises that in September 2020 the Indian Parliament passed three laws pertaining to the deregulation of the agricultural sector in India leading to an immediate response by farmers in opposition. Farmers are required to sell their produce in markets approved by local Agricultural Produce Market Committees at regulated minimum prices, a large portion of produce being purchased by the Indian government for distribution. Indian farmers contend that the laws would amount to the dismantling of India’s agricultural produce protections and minimum regulated prices, leading to predatory practices by larger corporations.

The Resolution further advises that protests against the laws began in the state of Punjab, a prominent region in India’s agricultural sector, but have since received widespread support domestically and abroad. Although the Indian government is engaging in talks with protest leaders, the talks remain inconclusive and demonstrations have continued around New Delhi since the passage of the legislation last year. These laws have the potential to disrupt local agricultural communities all over India and any such laws passed should be the result of an inclusive and deliberative process. The United States, including the City of Los Angeles, should take a stand with the farmers, advocate for their right to peaceably protest, and oppose any legislation or governmental action that results in the exploitation of agrarian communities.

The Resolution recommends that the City support any administrative or legislative action by the United States government to oppose the agricultural laws passed by the government of India in September 2020 which exploit agrarian communities in India.

BACKGROUND

On September 2020, the Indian Parliament passed three laws: the Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce Act, the Farmers’ Agreement Act, and the Essential Commodities Act. These laws were intended to reform the agricultural sector by allowing farmers to sell their products outside of designated Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) or “mandi” markets and by limiting governmental regulation of the agricultural sector. APMCs provide permits, levy taxes, and regulate the trade within their geographic confines. One of the key functions of APMCs is to ensure goods are purchased at the minimum support price (MSP), a governmentally guaranteed minimum price for the purchase of certain agricultural products within the APMC zones. The laws were intended to modernize India’s agricultural sector and allow farmers to trade their goods freely. The laws were also intended to help rural farmers who lacked

access to APMC markets become competitive. The laws do not repeal the “mandi” system, however many see the reforms as the first step in the dismantling of protected markets and the MSP.

On November 26, 2020, farmers from the Indian states of Punjab and Haryana began a march to New Delhi in opposition to the laws. The farmers believed that the laws would result in the loss of agricultural protections, namely the loss of the MSP. There was also widespread opposition to the expedited consideration of these laws by the Indian Parliament. The protests have continued around New Delhi since November 2020 as many protestors have remained camped and continue to protest at the periphery of New Delhi city limits. The protests have largely been peaceful but have seen violent clashes between protesters and police. Most recently, as a result of clashes that took place during a protest planned for Republic Day, Indian authorities blocked mobile internet services at three protest sites.

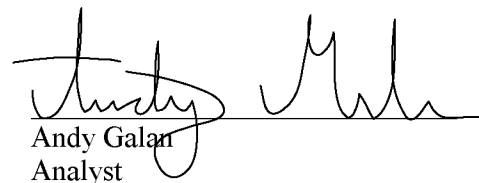
Representatives for the protest have engaged in talks with officials from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), India’s majority political party, and the Minister of Agriculture Narendra Singh Tomar but have been unable to reach an agreement. The implementation of the laws has been delayed for a year but protestors have continued to demand a full repeal of the laws.

The protests have received support internationally, especially among the Sikh community. In a letter to India’s ambassador to the United States, United States lawmakers have expressed concern over the violence and attempted suppression of the protests.

Support for administrative or legislative action by the United States government to oppose the agricultural laws passed by the government of India in September 2020 is consistent with past efforts to support the right to of individuals to peaceably protest and advocate for economic equity.

DEPARTMENTS NOTIFIED

None



Andy Galan
Analyst

Attachments: 1. Resolution (Rodriguez – Raman)

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations, or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state, or federal governmental body or agency must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, in September 2020, the Indian Parliament passed three laws pertaining to the deregulation of the agricultural sector leading to an immediate response by farmers in opposition; and

WHEREAS, currently farmers must sell their produce in markets approved by local Agricultural Produce Market Committees at regulated minimum prices, with a large portion of the produce being purchased by the governmental Food Corporation of India; and

WHEREAS, farmers contend that the laws would amount to the dismantling of India's agricultural protections and minimum regulated prices, leading to predatory practices by larger corporations; and

WHEREAS, protests began in the state of Punjab, a prominent region in India's agricultural sector, but have since received widespread support domestically and abroad; and

WHEREAS, although the Indian government is engaging in talks with protest leaders, the talks remain inconclusive and demonstrations have continued around New Delhi since the passage of the legislation last year; and

WHEREAS, these laws, passed during a worldwide pandemic, have the potential to disrupt local agricultural communities all over India and any such laws passed should be the result an inclusive and deliberative process; and

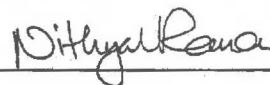
WHEREAS, the United States, including the City of Los Angeles should take a stand with the farmers, advocate for their right to peaceably protest, and oppose any legislation or governmental action that results in the exploitation of agrarian communities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by the adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2021-2022 Federal Legislative Program SUPPORT for any administrative or legislative action by the United States government to oppose the agricultural laws passed by the government of India in September 2020 which exploit agrarian communities in India, as further described in the text of this Resolution.

PRESENTED BY:


MONICA RODRIGUEZ
Councilwoman, 7th District

SECONDED BY:



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