

HCR 17 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Rules

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Meeting Dates: 4/21

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure recognizes and honors the history, resiliency, and strength of all Cambodian Americans, memorializes all those who lost their lives in the Cambodian Genocide, and honors all survivors of the conflict living in Oregon today.

Fiscal impact: No impact

Revenue impact: No impact

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

April 13 to 17 is a special time for many Cambodian people: a time of renewal, reflection and sharing of cultural heritage, with New Year celebrations in Cambodia (Choul Chnam Thmey) and other communities. For the Cambodian American community, April is also a time of reflection and mourning. On April 12, 1975, the United States withdrew from Cambodia in Operation Eagle Pull.

April 17, 2025, is the 50th anniversary of both the Khmer Rouge seizing control of Cambodia on April 17, 1975, and the beginning of the Cambodian Genocide in which approximately two million people, or almost a quarter of the Cambodian population, died in the Killing Fields.

In the United States, the history of the conflict and the decades after have scarcely been talked about. The initial resettlement of Cambodian and other Southeast Asian refugees to the United States between 1975 and 1979 resulted in the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, paving the way for hundreds of thousands of immigrants and refugees to resettle across the country. People of Cambodian heritage live and work in Oregon and contribute to the rich history and cultural tapestry of this state.

In 2018, the Cambodian American Community of Oregon worked with Governor Kate Brown to proclaim April 2018 as Cambodian American Heritage Month and Memorial for the Cambodian Genocide. On March 21, 2022, the California State Senate introduced Senate Resolution SR-78, recognizing the week of April 11 to April 17, 2022, as Cambodian Genocide Memorial Week. Other states of the United States, including Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Washington, have recognized and honored Cambodian communities individually or collectively.