



New York City Comptroller
John C. Liu

NEWS RELEASE

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LIU, SIKH GROUPS LAUNCH INITIATIVE TO REFORM NYPD RELIGIOUS GARB POLICY

NYPD dress code bans beards and turbans required by faith

NEW YORK, NY — City Comptroller John C. Liu, the Sikh Coalition, and United Sikhs launched a petition today calling on the City to reform the NYPD dress code policies that forbid Sikh officers from wearing turbans and beards, practices that are required by their faith.

The petition (available at comptroller.nyc.gov/sikh) follows a [letter](#) Comptroller Liu sent Mayor Bloomberg last month requesting the policy changes, which was delivered in the wake of the shooting at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wis. Last week, Sikh leaders convened in Washington, D.C. to discuss hate crimes and domestic extremism at a Senate subcommittee hearing.

“The NYPD shouldn’t force Sikhs to choose between serving their City and honoring their faith,” Comptroller Liu said. “Changing these policies would show that New York City deserves its reputation as a global capital of religious acceptance.”

The petition highlights recent changes made by the MTA and Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Police Department, and a 2011 New York City Council law that augments religious freedom at work. Comptroller Liu, the Sikh Coalition, and United Sikhs also noted that the policy changes would benefit non-Sikh New Yorkers who require head coverings or beards for religious reasons.

Copies of the petition will be circulated throughout New York City, and it is available online at Change.org. In the coming weeks, Comptroller Liu will visit gurdwaras and community groups to discuss the issue and gather signatures.

“Sikhs can and have served as police officers successfully all over the world,” said **Amardeep Singh, Director of Programs at the Sikh Coalition**. “The NYPD needs to understand that its ban on Sikh service is both wrong and illegal. If the NYPD does not soon welcome Sikhs into the force, it will eventually be sued and ordered to do so. It’s time to stand on the right side of history. Let’s integrate the force.”

“The Sikh Turban and the beard signify the emblems on which the American Civil Rights movement is based upon,” said **Mankanwal Singh, National Community Empowerment Director of United Sikhs**. “We thank Comptroller John C. Liu and his staff for taking this historic role in getting the Sikh Americans to serve in the NYPD while practicing their faith.”

“I introduced bill A6170-A, which will protect the rights of uniformed employees and all New Yorkers against discrimination for wearing any sort of dress or garment in observance of religious practices, including beards and turbans,” said **Assemblyman David Weprin**. “In order to promote understanding and tolerance in our city, we must make sure that individuals see people of all ethnicities, religions, and colors working as our firefighters, MTA workers, and police officers. An individual should never have to choose between their place of employment and their religious observance.”

“It is important that the chief enforcement agency, the NYPD, is reflective of the diversity of the city it serves and protects,” said **Councilman Ruben Wills**. “It is imperative that the policies we set do not limit the opportunities for those who are willing to serve.”

“If Canadians and the British allow Sikhs to serve while keeping their articles of faith, then it is time for New York City to catch up and allow us to serve,” said **Harpreet Singh Toor, Chairman of Public and External Affairs at the Sikh Cultural Society**. “New York City, which is home to such great diversity, should be more considerate and open to those communities that have decided to make this city as their own.”

“Sikhs across the United States of America are greatly saddened by what happened at the Wisconsin Sikh temple,” said **Mohinder Singh, founder of the Baba Makhan Shah Lubana Gurdwara Sikh Center**. “At the same time, we are encouraged by the concern shown by elected officials, religious leaders, and fellow citizens across the country. Now, the time has come to make concrete changes that will allow us to observe our faith while serving our city.”

“You cannot stop nature’s progress or muffle basic human rights,” said **Harbachan Singh, President of the Sikh American Friendship Foundation**. “So why not do the smart thing — get out of the way and let it happen.”

“I know lots of Sikhs who want to join the NYPD but don’t because of this regressive policy,” said **Prabhjot Singh Narula**. “Isn’t it time that a Sikh with a turban get a chance to serve his or her local community? Can’t a Sikh become one of New York’s Finest? You have cops with turbans serving in India, England, and Canada. But not in New York City?”

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