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American Sikh Committee to Evaluate
Congressional Candidates
www.americansikhcommittee.org
questionnaire@americansikhcommittee.org

Dear Committee,

Thank you for the privilege of submitting for your support in the 2014 election cycle.
It is my honor to respond to your questionnaire entitled:

CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE [November 2014 Elections]

Please see attached paperwork for my honest and open statements.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Amardeep Singh Kaleka', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Amardeep Singh Kaleka
Congressional Candidate WI-D1 2014

American Sikhs report that they endure increased scrutiny due to discriminatory profiling at airports around the United States by law enforcement.

1. Do you support the proposed federal End Racial Profiling Act?

YES.

I believe any law enforcement agent or agency should be prohibited from engaging in racial profiling. This act would require federal law enforcement agencies to maintain adequate policies and procedures to eliminate racial profiling and to cease existing practices that permit racial profiling. This act also authorizes the Attorney General to award grants and contracts for the collection of data relating to racial profiling and for the development of best practices and systems to eliminate racial profiling.

Post 9/11 in particular, my family and I have been personally affected by racial profiling during air travel. I have been stopped for many screenings far beyond what I would term a “normal given set of circumstances.”

Race, though distinguishable, cannot be a primary factor of profiling because race provides no substantial evidence for criminal or terrorist activity.

2. Do you support adding a prohibition on profiling on the basis of religion to the United States Justice Department Guidance on Racial Profiling?

YES

The act to end racial profiling would be strengthened by including prohibition of profiling based on religion. Many hate crimes and biases exist based on religious profiling. Some of these prejudices and intolerant views date back thousands of years, and we - as a country - must recognize why the right to practice one’s own religion is a founding principle of the United States Constitution.

School bullying acutely affects American Sikh school children. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights heard testimony that that a large majority of Sikh school children experience bullying and harassment in schools.

3. Do you support the proposed federal Safe Schools Improvement Act?

YES.

I believe any interventions that address bullying and harassment and create a positive school climate are vital. When combined with evidence-based discipline policies and practices, such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and restorative practices, the Safe Schools Improvement Act can minimize suspensions, expulsions, and other exclusionary discipline policies to ensure that students are not pushed-out or diverted to the juvenile justice system.

My experience with bullying is deeply personal. I attended school in a tough inner city environment during the 1980's when the turmoil in the Middle East was reaching a peak height in the United States. At the time, I carried my long ancestral hair in a bun on the top of my head. I'm in the red "patka" on the left of this picture. This was a cause for many bullies and tough kids to look down on me.

Luckily, my mother and father provided me with a great support that helped me get through the damaging effects of bullying. However, not all children have this available to them.

Any legislation that creates a safer environment for our children in schools will greatly benefit our whole nation.



In the United States, American Sikhs are barred from service in the US military unless they remove their religiously-mandated turban and cut religiously-mandated uncut hair. Over the past five years, the United States Army has made one-time, individual exemptions for three Sikh soldiers, allowing them to maintain their religiously-mandated turbans and uncut hair. Similarly, the Washington DC Police Department made a change in policy to allow any Sikh police officer to serve with his or her turban and uncut hair.

4. Do you support a change in United States military policy so that Sikhs would have an opportunity to serve our military while maintaining their turbans and uncut hair without requiring them to seek special, hard to obtain, revocable accommodations in order to do so?

YES.

As a former Army ROTC Cadet at Marquette University - I know first-hand that one's physical appearance, especially with facial hair, does not limit one's ability to be effective in battle. This is a well-known fact in other countries as well. For example, for many hundreds of years, all around the world, Western Militaries like the English, have allowed the Sikh soldiers to wear their unshorn hair and turbans. The French even revered it.

It is long overdue that the United States military policy followed suit on the issue. Diversity is not a lack of solidarity. Diversity is the very strength that creates a strong military force. I highly support this change in United States military policy.

5. Will you encourage law enforcement agencies in your Congressional district to allow Sikhs to serve as police officers without removing their religiously-mandated turbans and uncut hair?

YES.

I would go out of my way to encourage law enforcement agencies to allow Sikhs to serve in their turbans and with their unshorn hair because this is a great sign of diversity.

Wearing a turban bears no indication of a police officer's abilities at his or her job. If a police officer is great at their job, and does it to the best of their ability, I am sure that most supervisors would NOT care if he or she wears a turban.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of anti-Sikh pogroms in India. In the first week of November 1984, at least 3,000 Sikhs were killed in New Delhi alone. Government officials, law enforcement officers, and military forces failed to prevent or participated in this slaughter. In many documented incidents, public officials distributed voter lists and weapons used to locate and kill Sikh men, women, and children. Most of the perpetrators of the pogroms have not been brought to justice and many have flourished in government and political party positions.

6. Do you agree that thousands of Sikhs were murdered in India in November 1984 with the assistance of or lack of intervention by political parties, law enforcement, military or members of the government?

YES

My family and I immigrated from Punjab, India in 1982 as the tension and the political unrest grew. Because we family was not well off and America was far more expensive than we thought, my mother and father decided to send my brother and I back to India until they could find steady work. I remember very little from this time, however there is one very salient memory and emotion.

In Punjab, India at five years old - I remember hearing the wonderful sounds of fireworks and crowds gathering. Without telling anybody - I decided to courageously go see what was going on. I left my aunt's house and went down the street to the open field. There I witnessed one of the largest protests over the rising tension, and the fireworks were actually gunfire into the air. My aunt grabbed me by the back of the neck and dragged me back to the house. To this day, I still can smell the gun powder and dust in the night sky.

7. Would you, as a Member of Congress, seek to remember and acknowledge the pogroms against Sikhs in November 1984, pursue justice for the victims, and work to ensure it does not happen again?

YES - Absolutely.

The Sikh people have long been persecuted for many reasons. Even today, in America, we are victims of hate crime. We need to ensure that this does not happen to the Sikh nation, or any other nation for that matter - ever again.

As a community, we understand that our elected officials may have limited exposure to Sikhs and Sikhism. However, it is helpful in our evaluation to understand to what extent you may have an existing relationship or set of experiences with Sikhs.

8. Have you ever worked with, employed or been hired by a Sikh? If so, describe this experience.

YES - Many times, many experiences.

I have worked alongside Sikhs my whole life. I have worked for bosses who are Sikh. My father, Satwant Singh Kaleka, was my first boss. This experience, in particular, helped mold me into the hard working person I am today, someone with a understanding of what is right and wrong. I also worked for several of my uncles. Because my father and my uncles operate independent businesses, I learned a tremendous amount about economics and business practices.

9. Have you ever visited a Gurudwara (Sikh house of worship)?

YES - Many all around the world and around the nation.

My family, specifically my father - Satwant Singh Kaleka - helped build and raise the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin from scratch. Later, my father was brutally gunned down alongside six other beautiful people in that very same Gurudwara on August 5th, 2012. My brother, mother, and I took it upon ourselves - both economically and organizationally - to cap the Gurudwara with seven domes to match the blue print that our father drew up of the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin many years ago.



8. Do you encourage Sikhs to apply for opportunities with your government office or campaign office, including internships through the SikhLEAD Internship program? If so, please describe the process by which one may seek employment or internships with these offices, including the name, address and telephone number of the person with hiring responsibility.

YES.

While in office it would be my honor to retain at least one intern from the SikhLEAD internship program - both currently with my campaign office, as well as if elected to government office.

The process by which an intern could currently seek employment with my campaign office is as follows:

Go to www.votekaleka.org and fill out the volunteer form. Within that form, an applicant should indicate that they are seeking an internship. An staffer from my campaign office will then promptly contact the applicant.

