

Dear Vice President Biden,

On behalf of the 3 million strong Hindu American community, and an estimated 1.1 million registered voters concentrated in electoral swing states, the Hindu American Political Action Committee (HAPAC) invites you to complete the attached endorsement questionnaire for the upcoming election to the office of the President of the United States. These questions encompass issues that are of critical importance to the Hindu American community, ranging from domestic to foreign policy issues.

The Hindu American PAC is an independent, non-partisan federal political action committee for the Hindu American community. HAPAC's mission is to identify and support new federal candidates or incumbents who prioritize and are committed to religious freedom, civil and human rights, and other Hindu American interests. HAPAC also seeks to ensure that the religious freedom and human rights of Hindus in other parts of the world are a priority in the formulation of U.S. foreign policy on par with trade, security, and other strategic interests.

Your answers to these questions will help HAPAC decide on a potential endorsement for the President of the United States. As the only nonpartisan political action committee representing the Hindu American community, HAPAC believes that the HAPAC endorsement will be a strong signal to Hindus across the country as to the presidential candidate most attuned and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the Hindu American community.

We would appreciate your response by Thursday, Sept. 10. HAPAC's website, www.hinduamericanpac.com will publish all answers, irrespective of our endorsement decision.

Sincerely,

The Board of the Hindu American Political Action Committee
Mihir Meghani, M.D., Chairperson
Nikhil Joshi, Esq.
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<https://www.hinduamericanpac.com/>

Presidential Election 2020 Endorsement Questionnaire

Domestic Issues:

1. The FBI began recording anti-Hindu hate crimes for the first time in 2015. Since 2015, the FBI has recorded an approximate 300% increase in anti-Hindu hate crimes annually. What will your administration do to counter this trend?

We have a President who, in clear language and in code, encourages and emboldens prejudice and hatred — and that's dangerous. Hindu Americans have been subjected to bullying and xenophobic attacks and need now, more than ever, a reassurance that our leaders in Washington will have their backs.

It is no surprise that since Donald Trump took office, the number of anti-Hindu hate crimes has nearly tripled. From the murder of Srinivas Kuchibotla to the beating of a Hindu *swami* dressed in his religious attire to *mandirs* being vandalized and defaced, Hindu Americans have experienced firsthand the dangers of Donald Trump.

During the Obama-Biden Administration, the FBI expanded its hate crime statistics program to include Sikhs, Hindus, and Buddhists. A Biden-Harris Administration will directly address the rise in hateful attacks and enact legislation prohibiting someone convicted of a hate crime from purchasing or possessing a firearm. We will appoint leaders at the Justice Department who will prioritize the prosecution of hate crimes, and we will order the Justice Department to focus additional resources to combat hate crimes — including religion-based hate crimes — and to confront white nationalist terrorism. We will also seek legislation that increases the potential sentence for certain hate crimes that occur in houses of worship and other religious community sites, such as gurudwaras, mandirs, temples, and mosques. And, our Administration will use its executive power to ensure that the Department of Justice pursues such heinous acts of violence against houses of worship to the fullest extent of the law.

Most importantly, we have a record on this issue that the Hindu American community can trust. It was, after all, the Obama-Biden administration that added “Anti-Hindu” to the Department of Justice’s hate crime reporting categories. Hindu Americans can rest assured that we will take whatever actions are necessary to help protect them from hate crimes and their *mandirs* from similar harm.

2. Bullying of Hindu American children remains a grossly underreported and pervasive American problem. In a 2015 survey conducted by the Hindu American Foundation of 335 Hindu schoolchildren across the country, one-third of these children reported being bullied for their religion. The survey also found that Hinduism is taught in a negative light in the classroom, and that this adverse portrayal was a strong predictor of bullying. What will your administration do to combat this problem?

Bullying is entirely unacceptable, especially in the classroom where young minds are the victims. There are assuredly unique challenges facing Hindu American students, who belong to a minority faith that is depicted in the classroom in a manner that may not be consistent with their experience as practitioners. The depth of this challenge was laid bare by the Hindu American Foundation's survey and its troubling finding that one-in-eight respondents said their teachers made sarcastic remarks about Hinduism in front of class.

The words of a President matter, and they must be used to uplift -- not denigrate -- the Hindu community. We can and must do better. A Biden-Harris Administration will re-establish the Obama-Biden White House AAPI Bullying Prevention Task Force with community organizations that include Hindu American groups. The task force will help develop creative solutions to address concerns about the bullying of youth and provide information to affected communities, including the AAPI community, so they know what federal resources are available with respect to bullying and harassment. We will also allocate additional funding for the DOJ and Department of Education for anti-bullying initiatives, including those tackling the bullying of religious youth. Furthermore, I support passage of the Safe Schools Improvement Act, which requires school districts to develop bullying and harassment policies, and we will double the number of psychologists, guidance counselors, nurses, social workers, and other health professionals in our schools so our kids get the mental health care they need.

Moreover, diverse teachers who reflect their communities can help to mitigate instances of bullying based on religious identity. As a result, we will support more innovative approaches to recruiting teachers from diverse backgrounds, including supporting high school students in accessing dual-enrollment classes that give them an edge in teacher preparation programs and helping paraprofessionals work towards their teaching certificate.

We will also celebrate Hindu holidays, as was done in the Obama-Biden administration, which celebrated Diwali at the White House, the Vice President's residence at the Naval Observatory, and at the Pentagon. Just this year, Vice President Biden recognized [Holi](#) and [Ganesh Chaturthi](#). In doing this, our hope is to showcase how Hindu Americans are, in every way, Americans and that we are all bound by common values and aspirations, and that this may help to minimize the kinds of misunderstandings about Hinduism that cause bullying.

3. Many Hindu Americans are small business owners, entrepreneurs, and inventors. Small businesses have been slammed very hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to have difficulty recovering. What will your administration do for these small business owners to help them recover?

Our administration would take a number of steps to help small businesses recover.

In the short-term, we would establish a True Small Business Fund. Congressional Democrats secured a set-aside of \$60 billion in funds for smaller lenders and community-based financial institutions, which are frequently best positioned to get resources into the hands of deserving

small businesses in vulnerable communities. We called upon the Trump Administration to reserve fully half of all the new PPP funds for small businesses with 50 employees or less, so the bigger and more sophisticated businesses aren't able to win in a first-come, first-served race. It is unacceptable to have a small-business program that is leaving minority business owners out in the cold, or that firms with fewer than 20 employees received only about 20% of the money – even though they make up about one third of payroll. Small non-profits—including churches, mosques, and synagogues— should also be eligible for this fund. The Trump Administration can do this if it makes it a priority. The country will be watching. We also would prevent well-off business owners from using any program to unjustly enrich themselves. We would expedite loans with less unnecessary paperwork to hard-hit businesses, and never punish firms or banks for good-faith mistakes. But we would also make clear that no business owner should be receiving more than their lost revenue – and that there should be heightened scrutiny of certain types of small businesses – consulting, accounting, legal, tax advice, hedge funds – and where owners and executives are making above \$500,000. We are calling on the Trump Administration to embrace this approach in implementing the next round of funding.

We would also support further rule changes to the PPP that would ensure deserving small businesses get all the help they need for as long as they need, including providing a guarantee that every qualifying small business will get relief, rather than capping the fund in a way that forces small firms to compete against one another. We would also authorize more generous loans that allow for small businesses in need to both keep workers on payroll and cover fixed costs for the duration of the crisis. We would extend the eight-week limitation so that payroll forgiveness continues for the duration of the crisis, and there should be flexibility to allow businesses to decide when the covered period begins. We also would establish look-back audit mechanisms to police against abuse based on a review of net business income.

Moving forward, to support our economic recovery, our Administration will provide an ambitious “restart package” that provides small business owners support for retaining and rehiring workers, as well as for fixed costs as long as they are bringing back workers. We also will support work-sharing so that small businesses — and larger ones, too — can bring back all of their workers, even if they are not operating at full capacity, with the federal government making up the difference. We will provide grants for businesses to cover the costs of restarting in this challenging environment, including for supplies like personal protective equipment and plexiglass to use as a barrier to reduce transmission risk. We will swiftly end the racial inequity in small business support by ensuring that minority-owned businesses get effective access to all of these tools, as well as access to technical assistance — such as accounting support and legal advice — so that they are not shut out of federal aid programs.

We will spur public-private investment through a new small business opportunity plan. We will launch a special, ongoing initiative to empower these entrepreneurs to succeed and grow with a three-prong Small Business Opportunity Plan. It will:

- Spur more than \$50 billion in additional public-private venture capital to Black and Brown entrepreneurs by funding successful state and local investment initiatives and making permanent the highly effective New Markets Tax Credit.
- Expand access to \$100 billion in low-interest business loans by funding state, local, tribal and non-profit lending programs in Black and Brown communities and strengthening Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), Minority Depository Institutions (MDIs), and the Community Reinvestment Act.
- Eliminate barriers to technical assistance and advisory services by investing in a national network of cost-free business incubators and innovation hubs and intensive business seminars.

4. Hindus consider it a sacred duty to protect the environment, viewing all life as equal. Global climate change poses a grave threat to the world today. What will your administration do to address the issue?

From coastal towns to rural farms to urban centers, climate change poses an existential threat – not just to our environment, but to our health, our communities, our national security, and our economic well-being. It also damages our communities with storms that wreak havoc on our towns and cities and our homes and schools. It puts our national security at risk by leading to regional instability that will require U.S military-supported relief activities and could make areas more vulnerable to terrorist activities.

Our climate plan will:

- **Ensure the U.S. achieves a 100% clean energy economy and reaches net-zero emissions no later than 2050, and an emissions-free power sector by 2035.** On day one, our Administration will sign a series of new executive orders with unprecedented reach that go well beyond the Obama-Biden Administration’s platform and put us on the right track. And, we will demand that Congress enacts legislation in the first year of my presidency that: 1) establishes an enforcement mechanism that includes milestone targets no later than the end of my first term in 2025, 2) makes a historic investment in clean energy and climate research and innovation, 3) incentivizes the rapid deployment of clean energy innovations across the economy, especially in communities most impacted by climate change.
- **Rally the rest of the world to meet the threat of climate change.** Climate change is a global challenge that requires decisive action from every country around the world. We will lead an effort to get every major country to ramp up the ambition of their domestic climate targets. We will make sure those commitments are transparent and enforceable, and stop countries from cheating by using America’s economic leverage and the power of example. We will fully integrate climate change into our foreign policy and national security strategies, as well as our approach to trade.
- **Stand up to the abuse of power by polluters who disproportionately harm communities of color and low-income communities.** Vulnerable communities are

disproportionately impacted by the climate emergency and pollution. Our administration will take action against fossil fuel companies and other polluters who put profit over people and knowingly harm our environment and poison our communities' air, land, and water, or conceal information regarding potential environmental and health risks. And I'll make sure the development of solutions is an inclusive, community-driven process.

- **Fulfill our obligation to workers and communities who powered our industrial revolution and subsequent decades of economic growth.** This is support they've earned for fueling our country's industrial revolution and decades of economic growth. We're not going to leave any workers or communities behind.

We will make a \$2 trillion accelerated investment, with a plan to deploy those resources over my first term, setting us on an irreversible course to meet the ambitious climate progress that science demands. We will make far-reaching investments in:

- **Infrastructure:** Create millions of good, union jobs rebuilding America's crumbling infrastructure – from roads and bridges to green spaces and water systems to electricity grids and universal broadband – to lay a new foundation for sustainable growth, compete in the global economy, withstand the impacts of climate change, and improve public health, including access to clean air and clean water.
 - **Auto Industry:** Create 1 million new jobs in the American auto industry, domestic auto supply chains, and auto infrastructure, from parts to materials to electric vehicle charging stations, positioning American auto workers and manufacturers to win the 21st century; and invest in U.S. auto workers to ensure their jobs are good jobs with a choice to join a union.
 - **Transit:** Provide every American city with 100,000 or more residents with high-quality, zero-emissions public transportation options through flexible federal investments with strong labor protections that create good, union jobs and meet the needs of these cities – ranging from light rail networks to improving existing transit and bus lines to installing infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists.
 - **Power Sector:** Move ambitiously to generate clean, American-made electricity to achieve a carbon pollution-free power sector by 2035.
 - **Buildings:** Upgrade 4 million buildings and weatherize 2 million homes over 4 years, creating at least 1 million good-paying jobs with a choice to join a union; and also spur the building retrofit and efficient-appliance manufacturing supply chain by funding direct cash rebates and low-cost financing to upgrade and electrify home appliances and install more efficient windows, which will cut residential energy bills.
 - **Housing:** Spur the construction of 1.5 million sustainable homes and housing units.
 - **Innovation:** Drive dramatic cost reductions in critical clean energy technologies, including battery storage, negative emissions technologies, the next generation of building materials, renewable hydrogen, and advanced nuclear – and rapidly commercialize them, ensuring that those new technologies are made in America.
- Agriculture and Conservation:** Create jobs in climate-smart agriculture, resilience, and conservation, including 250,000 jobs plugging abandoned oil and natural gas wells and reclaiming abandoned coal, hardrock, and uranium mines – providing good work with a

choice to join or continue membership in a union in hard hit communities, including rural communities, reducing leakage of toxics, and preventing local environmental damage.

- **Environmental Justice:** Ensure that environmental justice is a key consideration in where, how, and with whom we build – creating good, union, middle-class jobs in communities left behind, righting wrongs in communities that bear the brunt of pollution, and lifting up the best ideas from across our great nation – rural, urban, and tribal.

You can read more about our climate plan at joebiden.com/climate.

5. The Fairness for High-Skilled Immigrants Act (S.386/H.R. 1044) removes an arbitrary per country cap on green cards for immigrants that is causing members of the Indian community to wait 50 years or more for legal permanent residency. Will you advocate for this Act and if it passes Congress, will you commit to signing this legislation into law?

We are, fundamentally, a nation of immigrants. The United States has been greatly enriched by Hindu and Indian immigrants, who have served our communities as essential workers, created jobs and economic growth as entrepreneurs, bled for our Nation as members of our armed forces, and worked for a more perfect Union as activists and public servants. Unlike the current administration, we will support immigration policies that recognize the immeasurable contributions of those who have choose to make America home.

We want to emphasize that our immigration plan includes numerous additional policies that support Indian and Hindu Americans. For example, we are committed to immigration reform that provides a roadmap to citizenship for nearly 11 million undocumented immigrants — including more than 500,000 from India. We will remove the uncertainty for Dreamers by reinstating the DACA program and explore all legal options to protect their families from inhumane separation. All of this is in direct opposition to Trump’s actions. Trump has publicly backed the RAISE Act, which dramatically lessens family-based immigration by reducing the types and number of sponsorships available. In addition, Trump attempted to rescind DACA, nearly tearing apart Indian and Hindu American families already woven into the fabric of our communities.

A Biden-Harris Administration will work with Congress to increase the number of visas awarded for permanent, employment-based immigration—and promote mechanisms to temporarily reduce the number of visas during times of high U.S. unemployment. We will also exempt from any cap recent graduates of PhD programs in STEM fields in the U.S. who are poised to make some of the most important contributions to the world economy. We believe that foreign graduates of a U.S. doctoral program should be given a green card with their degree and that losing these highly trained workers to foreign economies is a disservice to our own economic competitiveness. Critically, Vice President Biden believes that we need to reform our high skilled temporary visas support to establish a wage-based allocation process and establish enforcement mechanisms to ensure they are aligned with the labor market and not used to undermine wages, and, as part of that reform, he supports eliminating the limits on

employment-based green cards by country, which have kept so many Indian and Hindu families in waiting for too long.

You can read more about our immigration plan at joebiden.com/immigration.

6. As Hindu Americans, we believe along with a majority of Americans that policing reform is critically needed in order to unite the country and address systemic injustice. What substantive policing reform legislation will you propose and advocate for Congress to pass?

Hindu Americans aspire to teachings such as, “*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*,”—meaning, “the world is one family”—that reflect the American ethos of “*E pluribus unum*”—“out of many, one.” While it is thus only natural that Hindu Americans stand shoulder-to-shoulder with communities seeking justice, it nevertheless reflects and exemplifies America’s greatness.

As a nation, we must both continuously strive to improve our policing tactics and strategies while maintaining our commitment to ending systemic racism, keeping our communities safe, enforcing the law, and meeting the needs of victims of crime.

We know we can change our nation’s policing in smart and sensible ways. We have a substantive plan to expand and use the power of the U.S. Justice Department to address systemic misconduct in police departments and prosecutors’ offices. Using authority in legislation Joe spearheaded as senator, the Obama-Biden Justice Department used pattern-or-practice investigations and consent decrees to address circumstances of systemic police misconduct and to restore trust between police and communities in cities such as Ferguson. Yet, the Trump Administration’s Justice Department has limited the use of this tool. For example, under the Trump Administration, consent decrees between the Justice Department and police departments must now be signed off on by a political appointee from the Justice Department. And, the Justice Department has set an arbitrary limit on how long such consent decrees can remain in place regardless of whether an end to the agreement is warranted. We will work with Congress to ensure that the Department of Justice has subpoena power for pattern or practice investigations into systemic misconduct by police departments. Our Administration also will work to rein in qualified immunity. We should give police departments the resources needed to implement meaningful policies – policies we all agree on, like increased body-worn cameras and diversity on the force. We will reinvigorate community policing with \$300 million investment so police departments have enough money to hire a sufficient number of officers so their officers can get out of their cruisers and walk the streets, engaging with and getting to know members of their communities. And we need to condition other federal dollars on completing those reforms and others, like adopting a national use of force standard.

We need to prevent 911 calls in scenarios where police should not be our first

responders. Every time the police are called to be a social worker, marriage counselor, or mental health professional it is a lost opportunity to further a proactive investigation or address violent crime. This requires making serious investments in mental health services, drug treatment and prevention programs, and services for people experiencing homelessness.

International Issues:

1. Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, and other religious minorities face severe persecution in South Asian countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. What will your administration do to help these persecuted individuals?

I am concerned about dangerous conditions for religious minorities in South Asia and elsewhere. In Afghanistan, for example, the March, 2020 attack against the Sikh community in Kabul was a terrible tragedy, which underscored the continued persecution of religious minorities. I have long been a champion of religious freedom. Historically, the United States has gladly offered safe haven to those fleeing religious persecution and violence. When I was in the Senate, I cosponsored the legislation that created our refugee program. The Trump administration has done severe damage to America's refugee policy, including using COVID-19 as an excuse to suspend the program altogether. If we are elected, our administration will renew America's commitment to standing as a beacon of hope for refugees around the world, including those fleeing religious persecution and seeking the freedom to worship as they choose. We will increase the number of refugees we welcome into this country, setting an annual global refugee target of 125,000 — up from a ceiling of 18,000 under Trump — and will seek to further raise it over time commensurate with our responsibility, our values, and the unprecedented global need. We will support efforts to work with Congress in a bipartisan fashion to protect our refugee policy from drastic and arbitrary reductions we have seen during the Trump Administration and establish a minimum admissions number of at least 95,000 refugees annually. We will pursue policies that increase opportunities for faith and local communities to sponsor refugee resettlement.

2. Cross-border terrorism sponsored by the Pakistani government against India has been a major destabilizing force in the region, especially in Jammu and Kashmir. Will your administration stand with India and call upon Pakistan to stop its sponsorship of such terrorism?

We believe that India and the United States are natural partners, and if elected, our administration will place a high priority on continuing to strengthen the U.S.-India relationship. A Biden-Harris administration will have no tolerance for terrorism in South Asia -- cross-border or otherwise. Our administration will work to strengthen India's capabilities as a defense and counter-terrorism partner. During the Obama-Biden administration, the U.S. and India strengthened their cooperation to fight terrorism in each of our countries and across the region, and if we are elected, the Biden-Harris administration will continue and build on this effort.

