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Press Release:

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Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS) celebrates the resiliency of the US and Indian Democracies

[Milpitas, 07/28/2024] – On the occasion of independence days of the US and India, the Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS) hosted an august gathering of esteemed elected leaders and community leaders to celebrate the resiliency of democracies in the US and India.

The event, “***Celebrating the Resiliency of Democracies***” held at FalconX, Milpitas, organized on the occasion of US and India’s independence days featured addresses from key figures including the Consul General of India, Dr. Srikar Reddy, Milpitas Mayor Carmen Montano, Assemblymember Evan Low, Assemblymember Alex Lee, Santa Clara Supervisor Otto Lee, Alameda County Supervisor David Haubert, Supervisor Elisa Marquez, Santa Clara Mayor Lisa Gillmor, and Fremont Mayor Lily Mei. Council members and commissioners from Fremont, Milpitas, Santa Clara, San Ramon, and Sunnyvale also graced the event. In all, about 30-plus elected officials including two state assemblymen, three county supervisors, three mayors, two vice mayors, and many council members and commissioners graced the event.

Mayor Carmen Montano welcomed the leaders to the City of Milpitas and expressed her pleasure to host this celebration of the resilient democracies of the US and India.

Dr. Srikar Reddy addressed the gathered community and underscored the increasingly robust partnership between India and the United States. He mentioned that the US-India partnership is going to be the century-defining partnership and the shared value of democracy is instrumental in that. He also applauded FIIDS for this timely celebration of democracies when the US and Indian democracies go into an election in the same year in 20 years. Dr Reddy also thanked FIIDS for bridging the information gap about the differences between the two democracies.

California assemblymember Alex Lee appreciated FIIDS working on advocating Indian diaspora-related policy issues. He highlighted the Indian Diaspora’s contribution to the state of California. Alameda County Supervisor David Haubert praised the Indian Community for bringing its culture and values to American soil and mentioned that the US and India will shape the global economy in the future. Fremont Mayor Lily Mei highlighted the Indian Diaspora’s participation in US electoral politics and appealed for its increased presence in the decision-making. Supervisor Elisa Marquez, who was elected unopposed in Alameda County, appreciated FIIDS’ work in policy advocacy and emphasized the importance of diversity participation in civic leadership. Supervisor Otto Lee mentioned the partnership between the largest and longest democracies and the need for community participation to further the shared interests.

Mayor of Santa Clara Lisa Gillmore, Mayor of Fremont Lily Mei, and Mayor of Milpitas Carmen Montano gave proclamations appreciating FIIDS for bringing together the community leaders and elected leaders to celebrate the vibrant nature of the world’s oldest democracy of the US and the world’s largest democracy of India.

FIIDS director for Political Liaison, Yogi Chugh, hosted a panel discussion with Joe Johal (Chairman of APAPA), Ajay Jain Bhatoreia (commissioner on the Presidential Advisory Committee on Pacific Islanders), and FIIDS Chief of Policy and Strategy, Khanderao Kand. During the discussion, Mr. Johal emphasized outreach across diverse communities, especially outside the Indo-American community, to create a wider impact. Ajay Bhatoreia acknowledged the increased political participation by the community but emphasized engaging more like FIIDS to make an impact on policies like immigration. Khanderao briefed the audience about its ongoing work on policy issues related to technology, immigration, and US-India partnership in various sectors. He also emphasized the need for the Indian diaspora's active participation in US politics and elaborated the FIIDS efforts towards capacity building such as congressional internship and high school internship. Ajay Bhatoreia and Jo Johal echoed Mr. Khanderao and appealed to the community for more engagement.

Notably, California assembly members and elected representatives from Fremont, Milpitas, and Santa Clara presented the proclamations/appreciation certificates to FIIDS for its impactful work on advocating the Indian community's issues and for being the voice of the Indian Diaspora at Capitol Hill. Khanderao announced that FIIDS placed four interns this year in the House of Representative offices on Capitol Hill. He also shared that FIIDS now has an office in the DC and a full-time policy analyst, Devashri Khadke. He further told that 43 high schoolers are currently participating in FIIDS Certificate Program in Civic Engagement and Leadership.

The event, the first of its kind, brought together leaders in the Bay Area to celebrate the two important democracies of the world.

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About FIIDS: The Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS) is a dynamic organization dedicated to advancing the interests and addressing the concerns of the Indian diaspora. Through research, advocacy, and community engagement, FIIDS strives to create a lasting impact on issues that matter most to the community.