



Congressman Joe Wilson (R-SC)

Co-Chair: India Caucus

Member: Armed Service Committee, Education & Workforce Committee

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Cannon Caucus Room

Opening Remarks at the Seminar on India

Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen. Its an hour to be with you this afternoon. This is such a historic time when India and the US is having the closest relations in the history. I am proud to let you know that the largest country caucus, of any country in the Capitol Hill is India Caucus. This is a reflection of affection that many members of congress have towards India and the contributions of Indian Americans to this society.

This is an extraordinary situation, particularly since the caucus has traditionally been democratic with the Democratic Party and I am the republican co-chairman of the India caucus. Congressman Joe Crowley is the co-chair on the democratic side. But on the republican side last year due to the able leadership of the former co-chair from the republican side, there has been a tripling of the membership on the Republican side.

One of the superstars is here today; I am looking forward to listening to his presentation. He is one of the good friends here that are promoting good and better relationships between the United States and India.

I am so enthusiastic about being the co-chair of the India caucus. My introduction to India begins at home. My father was stationed in India during the World War II. Then I got interested in India during the high school and did a paper on the world's largest democracy India and learned about the country. The while I was serving as a real estate attorney I met many people of Indian American background who bought Hotels and Motels all over south central South Carolina. The significance of that is that there is a largest industry which I know and represent, in which the majority of the Hotels and Motels in South Carolina and in the south east are owned by the persons of Indian American descent. And it is a very telling example of the entrepreneurial and business acumen of the Indian American community. And it also shows that the Indian American community is quicker to assimilate into the American life.

My other reason for the appreciation I have for the Indian American community is when my predecessor, Cong. Floyd Spence received a double lung transplant by Dr. Seshadri Raju in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1988. This was an extraordinary operation at that time and Congressman Floyd Spence wrote to me 13 years after the surgery saying that he found out two years after the operation that the operation was an experiment by a very courageous and capable Indian American physician. So, I can tell you how much the Indian American community means to me and now I want to do my part to promote the Indian American Community, and their assimilation into the American society.

In this post cold war era I also like to promote better relationship with India. Of course, since I have been the member of the armed services committee, I can tell you that the level of contacts between the Indian armed forces and the American military has improved. Just last May, we had joint exercises, both air and land, with the Indian army.

Additionally in January the President has announced a strategic partnership with India. And in turn India has joined the program that we have for the development of the missile defense system. The partnership is at the level that we have with Australia, which is an ally of the untied states since its existence and so it's just extraordinary to see the advances that has been made.

Other than this there is another important issue which sometimes seems like India bashing. Last year we had a 23% increase in exports from United States to India. This is again, unprecedented. The imports from India to the United States are also is to grow in the same direction. Even in the midst of this, what it perceived to be a potentially a demagogy turn about the relationship with India, we had a vote about two weeks ago. It was arranged by the majority leader Tom DeLay in which we received a unanimous vote of 18 (?) to nothing to recognize India's Republic Day. So, it was an extraordinary recognition that large number of members of Congress do want to support India. It was a very strongly worded resolution and I was happy to be the lead sponsor; again to commend India for it to be the world's largest democracy. This was a commendation from the world's largest democracy.

It is my privilege to wish every speaker in this event. We have speakers from all over the world today here . It is my privilege to welcome you to the congress. If I can be of any service to you in any way, please let us know. My staff, Dino Teppera is the Executive Director of the India Caucus. He works 24/7 and please do call him if you need anything from me. Thank you and best wishes to everyone.