

SHEILA JACKSON LEE
18TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2435 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-3816

DISTRICT OFFICE:
1919 SMITH STREET, SUITE 1180
THE GEORGE "MICKEY" LELAND FEDERAL BUILDING
HOUSTON, TX 77002
(713) 655-0050

ACRES HOME OFFICE:
6719 WEST MONTGOMERY, SUITE 204
HOUSTON, TX 77019
(713) 691-4882

HEIGHTS OFFICE:
420 WEST 19TH STREET
HOUSTON, TX 77008
(713) 961-4070

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

COMMITTEES:
JUDICIARY

SUBCOMMITTEES:
CRIME, TERRORISM, AND HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member
IMMIGRATION, BORDER SECURITY, AND CLAIMS

HOMELAND SECURITY

SUBCOMMITTEES:

INTELLIGENCE, INFORMATION SHARING, AND
TERRORISM RISK ASSESSMENT

ECONOMIC SECURITY, INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION,
AND CYBERSECURITY

MANAGEMENT, INTERGRATION, AND OVERSIGHT

SCIENCE

SUBCOMMITTEES:

ENERGY
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Member
DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS POLICY AND
STEERING COMMITTEE

Co-Chair
CONGRESSIONAL CHILDREN'S CAUCUS

CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE OF TEXAS

**STATEMENT FOR
ANNUAL BANQUET DINNER**

**ASSOCIATION OF PAKISTANI PHYSICIANS OF NORTH AMERICA
(APPNA)**

**HYATT REGENCY HOTEL
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
JULY 8, 2006**

As the Founding Co-Chair of the Congressional Pakistan Caucus, it brings me great pleasure to have been invited again to speak at this momentous Annual Banquet Dinner of the Association of Pakistani Physicians of North America (APPNA).

It is a pleasure to be a part of the 29th Annual Summer Meeting of the APPNA, which has been made possible by the hardworking Pakistani physicians and members of the community. Almost thirty years ago at the first session of APPNA, only about twenty physicians were in attendance. During this Summer Meeting, thousands of Pakistani physicians from throughout North America are actively present. Needless to say, this is a significant achievement that should make you all very proud and which speaks volumes about the progress of the Pakistani American community and this fine organization. It is my honor to be here tonight to honor and celebrate all that the APPNA stands for, and its continuation to strive for the promotion of the Pakistani community here in North America as well as in Pakistan.

First, let me begin by stating that I am wholeheartedly committed to the ascendancy of Pakistan in the international community. Pakistan has been a loyal and unwavering ally in our global war on terror, which has played a decisive role in helping to remove the Taliban regime from Afghanistan and the capture of

hundreds of wanted al-Qaeda terrorists. Pakistan has suffered thousands of casualties and has been a victim of numerous terrorist acts on their own soil because of their steadfast alliance with our nation in the war on terror.

Accordingly, I am grateful to the people and government of Pakistan, who in the aftermath of the devastation and loss of innocent life which occurred on 9/11, and on the eve of the 5 year anniversary of 9/11, continue to support our efforts to stamp out international terrorism.

Further, I am pleased by the fact that the Pakistani American community is vibrant and steadily growing. It is the work of organizations such as APPNA that are paving the way and setting the agenda on important issues such as civil rights and political activism in the U.S. by organizing vital gatherings such as this one. I want to commend all of you who represent the best and brightest in your community for helping those who may be less fortunate than yourselves. Through your hard work, you have all been able to be successful physicians and cornerstones of your communities.

Since your last Summer Meeting in Houston, Texas, a tremendous amount has happened around the world. Moreover, two particular events have immensely affected life in your native homeland of Pakistan. In October of last year, a massive earthquake of 7.6 magnitude hit South Asia upsetting the regions of India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The estimated death toll for Pakistani people was near 35,000 alone. Such tremendous loss of life is felt by all, not just those who are directly involved. The APPNA has been in the forefront as an advocate in raising money and aid to send as relief to those living in and surviving the incredible devastation.

The APPNA shows continuous support to people and places that need their assistance whether in Pakistan or here in the United States. During the plight of last summer when Hurricanes Katrina and Rita displaced thousands of families from their homes throughout the Gulf Coast, the APPNA provided immediate financial, material and logistical help to the victims. Physicians from APPNA also organized free mobile clinics in collaboration

with the city of Houston to provide immediate health care services to the relocated victims. I want to congratulate the leadership of APPNA and the members on their commendable work in providing relief to the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

On March 2, 2006, there was a catastrophic bombing near the U.S. consulate in Karachi, Pakistan which claimed the lives of one diplomat and two others, and injured about 30 by-standers.

President Musharraf and the Pakistani people have been a strong ally in the War on Terror. It is important for the people of the US and the people of Pakistan to stand together to embrace a future of cooperation and collaboration not only in the important fight against terror, but also to join in the fight to bring education to generation of young Pakistani citizens.

As a member of the Committee on Homeland Security and the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, the protection of our national security is in the forefront of my agenda. However, using 9/11 as an impetus to engage in racial profiling, harassment, and discrimination of Muslim and Arab

Americans is not only deplorable, it undermines our civil liberties and harms our reputation in the very communities we need to win the global war on terror.

By all accounts, racial profiling, harassment, and discrimination of Muslim and Arab Americans increased in the aftermath of 9/11. Unfortunately, scapegoating vulnerable populations is not an uncommon phenomenon in American history, with the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II being perhaps the clearest example of what can happen when we disregard the better angels of our nature. Since 9/11 Muslims and Arabs have become the visible recent target of this practice, just as African Americans have been targeted throughout American history from the lynchings of centuries ago to the lynching of James Byrd, Jr. in Jasper, Texas, in 1998.

Fortunately, incidents of violence and bigotry against Muslims and persons of Arab descent has declined significantly since the early frightful days following the attacks of September 11. That is good for all peoples concerned. By engaging in racial

profiling, harassment, and discrimination of Muslim and Arab Americans, Americans do a grave disservice to the principles on which our nation is founded, which diminishes us all. Further, whenever we engage in racial profiling of Muslim and Arab Americans, we fuel the same anti-American sentiment that we are trying to combat in the Middle East. By employing such abhorrent practices, we implicitly discourage the vast majority of Muslim and Arab Americans who are loyal citizens from being our partners in our global war on terror. We further discourage legitimate opportunities for fostering cultural exchange, diplomacy, and education between our peoples and nations.

As Co-chair of the Pakistan Caucus I have worked through the years to encourage the close relationship between the American and Pakistani people, as well as our common interest in striving toward peace. We have stood by Pakistan and its people through many difficult times. We can not let this event derail our ongoing struggle for peace, prosperity, and security in Pakistan or around the world.

Many years of civil rights jurisprudence and law is ignored and thrown out the window when America permits the racial profiling, harassment, and discrimination of Muslim and Arab Americans to occur with impunity. Such practices show a reckless and utter disregard for the fundamental values on which our country is founded: namely, due process; the presumption of innocence; nondiscrimination; individualized rather than group suspicion; and equal justice under law.

As illustrated by my unequivocal support for and introduction of hate crimes legislation, voting rights legislation, amendments prohibiting the racial profiling of Muslim and Arab Americans, and a comprehensive and more humane immigration policy, I am proud to have championed the cause of protecting the civil rights of all Americans, especially Muslim and Arab Americans. I refuse to sit idly by while civil liberties are trampled in the name of the global war on terror. We can wage and win the war on terror is impeded.

I believe that the African American community and the Pakistani community share much in common. We both believe strongly in the value of family, the centrality of faith, and the primacy of justice a supreme civic value. However, there are those few in this nation who seek to put barriers in the paths of minority communities. African Americans have been persecuted and discriminated against in one form or another since the founding of this nation, from slavery and legal segregation that created the inequalities that plague us to this day.

Today, the Pakistani American community is being held back by those who allow their fears to yield to bigotry. After the attacks of September 11th, our nation came together instead of coming apart. People of all races and faiths united to tell the world that we would not allow terrorists to change our national character or divide our national community. However, as is always the case, a few individuals used the tragedy of September 11th to persecute innocent Americans, especially those who were Muslim or seemed to be from the Middle East or South Asia.

I am here to tell you that these intolerant people do not define America and will not be allowed to define your proud community. We stand together as peoples of color and peoples of faith. We proudly proclaim this as our nation. We must heed the wise words of the Quran (“Koran”), Chapter 3 Verse 103 which state: ***“And hold fast by the covenant of God all together and be not disunited, and remember the favor of God on you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His favor you became brethren”***.

We are at a critical juncture in defending the evolution of the constitution and the rule of law. We cannot turn the legal clock back to an imagined ideal past. Our Constitution is not rooted in the outdated notions of separate but equal, the superior rights of property over people, or injustice in the name of the free market.

If the voices of reason remain silent, we are ignoring our historical roots in why we fought the Civil War, the humanistic foundations of our nation’s civil rights laws and the growing diversity of our population. As Dr. King said, ***“injustice anywhere***

is a threat to justice everywhere.” I am reminded of his words to the packed house at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, the night before the bus boycott set off by Rosa Parks, regarding their role in the process of making America whole. He said, *“If we are wrong, the Constitution of the United States is wrong. If we are wrong, justice is a lie. We are determined to work and fight until justice runs down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream.”*

Indeed it states in the Quran Chapter 4 Verse 135: *‘Oh you who believe, stand up firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even if it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be against rich or poor; for God can best protect to others. Do not follow any passion, lest you not be just. And if you decline to do justice, verily God is well-acquainted with all that you do.’*

I have no doubt that APPNA and the Pakistani-American community will continue to grow larger and stronger in the future.

I have no doubt that this bodes well for all Americans because a

community such as yours that values hard work and ethical behavior can only be an asset to our nation. As the Founding Co-Chair of the Congressional Pakistan Caucus, I look forward to celebrating our continued progress, and our achievements in making this nation better not only for Pakistani-Americans, but for all Americans.

I appreciate the warmth and concern you have extended to me tonight, and I promise to extend to you and your country the same warmth and concern. I look forward to discussing with you how I can help your community here and the country of Pakistan by advancing democracy, human rights, and development.

I close by stating that in addition to fighting for the civil rights of Pakistani Americans here, we must also work for the human rights, economic empowerment, and political efficacy of your brethren in Pakistan. I am committed to the principle of constructive engagement with President Musharraf and the Parliament of Pakistan on a host of human rights, economic development, and political reform issues. For example, I have

worked with a Pakistani woman and doctor named Dr. Shazia Khalid, who is in exile from her country and family due to the Zina provisions of the Hudood Ordinances which enforces punishments for adultery even in the case of rape. I believe in the promotion of women's rights by reforming provisions of the Hudood Ordinance, and I am encouraged by President Musharraf's directives of last week calling on the Council of Islamic Ideology to draft an amendment to the Hudood Ordinance, annul discriminatory laws against women, and ordering the immediate release of female prisoners involved in crimes other than murder, robbery, and terrorism.

I am also committed to working with the government of Pakistan to reduce poverty, improve access to healthcare, protect the rights of religious and ethnic minorities, ensure that all Pakistani's have a voice in the administration of justice.

The purpose of government is to serve the people. I hope all of you will take the opportunity to help government serve your interests by participating in the process, which in turn will help you

continue to serve our collective communities. I urge you to call on me whenever I can be of assistance. And I encourage you to consider this a call to action to work tirelessly to ameliorate the status of Pakistanis in the U.S. and in Pakistan. In Chapter 13 Verse 11 the Quran states: ***“surely Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition.”***

I have no doubt that APPNA and the Pakistani-American community will continue to grow larger and stronger in the future, and I have no doubt that this bodes well for all Americans because a community such as yours that values hard work and ethical behavior can only be an asset to our nation. As the Founding Co-Chair of the Congressional Pakistan Caucus I look forward to celebrating our continued progress and our achievements in making this nation better not only for Pakistani-Americans, but in fact for all Americans.

I want to thank you all for your service and dedication to the community. May God bless you and enjoy and may you enjoy the rest of your Summer Meeting here in Chicago.