

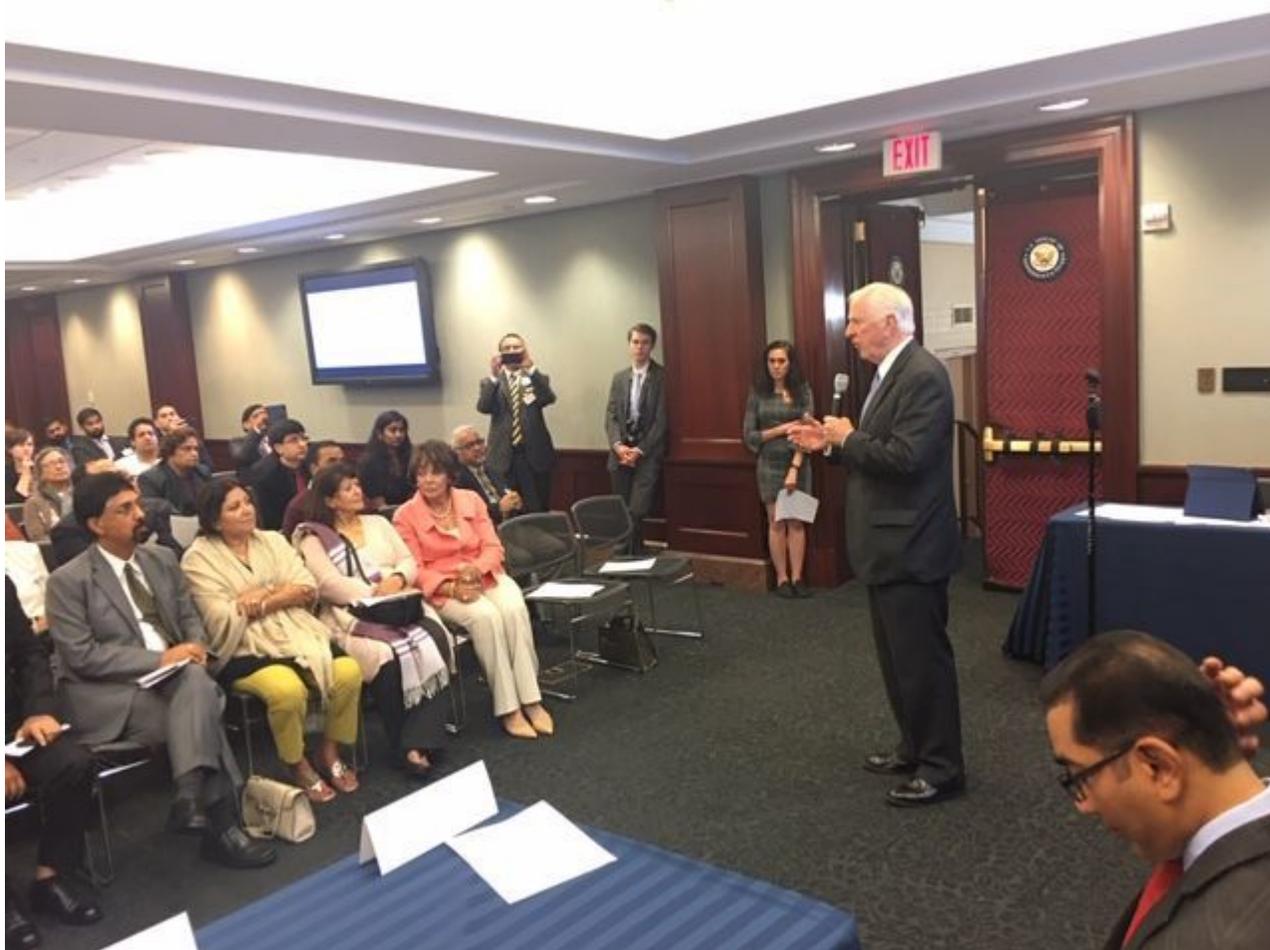
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FEATURED

Indo-American Community Federation Holds Congressional Briefing on 'Kashmir the Way Forward' at Capitol Hill

India-West Staff Reporter

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The Indo-American Community Federation Oct. 16 hosted a congressional briefing at Capitol Hill during which the discussion touched on the issues in Kashmir. The event was also attended by a large number of congressional staff, Indian Americans and Kashmiri Pandits. (photo provided)

The Indo-American Community Federation, in conjunction with the Kashmiri Overseas Association and the U.S.-India Political Action Committee, Oct. 16 held a congressional briefing at Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

The focus of the briefing, sponsored by U.S. Rep. Anna Eshoo, was on “Kashmir the Way Forward,” hoping to promote pluralism, reconnect and reintegrate the hearts and minds of the people of Kashmir following the removal of Articles 370 and 35A earlier this year, according to a news release.

It was attended by Congressmembers Ro Khanna, Mike Thompson, Zoe Lofgren, Mark Desaulneir and Dorthy Matsui. The chairman of House of Foreign Relation Committee, Elliot Engel, also attended the event.

Eshoo, in her opening statement, emphasized that India and U.S., the two largest democracies in the world, need to work to strength democracies, the release said.

She introduced the attending congressmen and congresswomen who then briefly introduced themselves to the audience. The event was also attended by a large number of congressional staff, Indian Americans and Kashmiri Pandits.

Congressman Khanna said, “I was born in the USA in 1976 and I am proud of my South Asian roots. I came to this briefing to grasp the many issues related to the Kashmiri community and I am glad I am here tonight to learn more.”

Sanjay Puri, chairman of USINPAC, said, “Kashmir is a very serious issue for Indian Americans. It should also be an important issue to the U.S., as India is a vital partner.”

Dr. Shakun Malik, president of KOA, talked about the plight of the ethnically cleansed Kashmiri Pandits and the discrimination faced by Kashmiri women, minorities and weaker sections of society due to Articles 370 and 35A, according to the news release.

Heart-wrenching personal stories by some victims of Kashmiri terrorism in 1990-1991 were shared by Swapna Raina, Dr. Archana Kokroo and Sachin Koul, it said.

Jeff M. Smith, research fellow from Heritage Foundation, who has previously visited Kashmir, was touched by the stories of the Kashmiri Pandit victims and wondered why these stories of genocide and ethnic cleansing have not been covered by the western press while Pakistan’s narrative about Kashmir has been getting wide press coverage, the release noted.

Dr. C. Shaykher, a renowned cardiologist from Florida, spoke about misconceptions about Hindutva and touched upon the historic perspective of Kashmir with emphasis that Kashmiri Hindus have a five thousand years of documented civilizational legacy.

Dr, Surinder Kaul, international coordinator of the Global Kashmiri Pandit Diaspora, stated that the most dangerous framing of the issue in the U.S. media reporting is fanning religious polarization with the use of the Hindu Muslim binary. The only binary that exists in Kashmir is that between peace and violence, the latter introduced by the gun culture of the terrorists.

Kaul referred to a declaration of Jihad by Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan and condemned attempts to sanctify violence by him.

Jeevan Zutshi, who hosted the briefing event, emphasized that the way forward for Kashmir is to ensure that people of all religions, including minorities, live peacefully in Kashmir with justice, security and economic opportunities for all and hoped that U.S. Congress passes a resolution endorsing Kashmiri Pandit ethnic cleansing.

A brief video presentation about current life in Kashmir depicting gradual return to normalcy in Kashmir, including business in hospitals and schools, were part of the event, it said.

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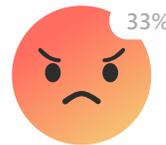
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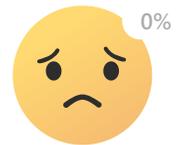
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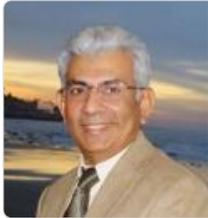
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