

Indian American community leader Jeevan Zutshi honored on California Senate floor after 22nd Unity Dinner

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Ritu Jha-

Jeevan Zutshi has been holding the IACF Unity Dinner for 22 years in order to build bridges with diverse groups. “I am still hopeful that we will flourish as a peaceful community as we understand each other better and not divide ourselves,” Zutshi told [indica](#), soon after this year’s Unity Dinner on April 21.

Zutshi is a veteran community leader and the chairman and co-founder of Indo-American Community Federation (IACF-USA).

This year's dinner was attended by over 300 people, including 38 legislators, and was held at India Community Centre in Milpitas, California.

According to Zutshi, IACF-USA is a non-profit that works to bring a diverse population together to address serious issues facing the community at large, promote understanding and positive relations through seminars and conventions, as well as to encourage Indo-Americans to become more involved in mainstream America and address issues affecting them in their adopted land.

On April 24, Zutshi and his team were honored and recognised on the California Senate floor for their 30 years of community service. California Senator Dave Cortese, 15th Senatorial District; and Aisha Wahab, 10th Senatorial District led the honors panel.

Though the topic for this year's dinner was 'The Rise in Gun Violence and the Impact on our Youth', what was discussed more among the attendees was Senate Bill SB 403, which Zutshi feels has divided the community already.

Senator Wahab, who confirmed she would attend the Unity Dinner, was not present. An upset Zutshi told indica, "Senator Wahab (who authored SB 403) should have been focusing on a myriad of issues all Americans are facing, like the increase in gun violence, mental illness, teenage suicides, homelessness, and more. But bringing up an issue (caste discrimination) which is of the least importance and value, was unnecessary. I had invited Hindu American Foundation (HAF) to give a presentation so she would understand it better, but she cancelled

her participation at the panel discussion and unity dinner.”

He added, “Many Hindus are hurt at her action, and I am hoping that better sense will prevail as she gains more experience as a Senator.”

During his brief speech at the Unity Dinner, Zutshi said, “Culturally, Indian Americans bring to the US a more cohesive family life, a sense of community and respect for education... by introducing bills which are divisive, we will be dividing our communities. It is grossly irresponsible to politicize any situation. No electoral goal justifies endangering lives by creating a false narrative that results in friction. Let us get politics out of our communities and strive to eradicate other safety-related issues we are facing at present.”

During his speech, Zutshi referred to Rev. Martin Luther Jr’s India visit and said, “As Indians, we have to feel proud that our ancient culture and spiritual wisdom have something unique to offer, even today, to reinvigorate nonviolence in America.”