

Reprint from India West

Former Speaker Newt Gingrich to Chair Republican Hindu PAC



Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich (2nd from right) looks on as Rep. Rodney Davis (center) and Indian American businessman Shalabh Kumar light a lamp to launch the Republican Hindu Coalition. (RHC photos)



Shalabh 'Shalli' Kumar, founder of the Republican Hindu Coalition, with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. Kumar told India-West he is working with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu to create a new city – which will be known as Rana Reagan – devoted entirely to American manufacturing.

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Former Speaker Newt Gingrich to Chair Republican Hindu PAC SUNITA SOHRABJI, India West | 0 comments

Former House Speaker [Newt Gingrich](#) will serve as the chairman of the newly-formed Republican Hindu Coalition, which officially launched Nov. 17 in Washington, DC.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Kentucky; along with Reps. Ed Royce, chairman of the powerful House Foreign Affairs Committee; and Pete Sessions, chairman of the House Rules Committee, attended the launch, which began with the traditional Hindu ceremony of lighting of lamps. Also in attendance were Sens. Rob Portman, R-Ohio; Kelly Ayotte, R-New Hampshire; and Ron Johnson, R-Wisconsin.

“An organization like the RHC could dramatically change history,” Gingrich told the audience at the launch. The former House Speaker also spoke about the “dangers of Pakistan” and “radical jihadists” which he said were a common enemy for India and the U.S.

The RHC is the brainchild of Chicago, Ill., Indian American businessman Shalabh ‘Shalli’ Kumar, who envisioned the new PAC after attending the annual meeting of the Republican Jewish Coalition last April in Las Vegas, Nevada.

“There were just 600 people there, but I was amazed at the influence they have generated in the American political system,” Kumar told **India-West**, noting that the RJC had lobbied for Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s speech to Congress in March. “They have all collected together to speak with one voice,” he said.

Hindu Americans are also prolific donors to political campaigns, but they contribute on an individual basis so efforts are scattered, said Kumar. “We currently have very little influence on

policy-making. With the forming of the RHC, we will finally have a platform from which Hindu American voices can be heard,” he stated.

Kumar – who reportedly has close ties to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi – has already donated \$2 million to launch the new PAC, and said the RHC expects to raise \$10 million to donate to various Republican presidential and Congressional candidates. He has urged all Hindu American Republicans and other Indian American Republicans to make their political expenditures through the Coalition, rather than individually.

The Coalition has not yet announced its support for any Republican presidential candidate, said Kumar, the chairman of AVG Advanced Technologies.

The newly-launched coalition will first focus its attention on the Obama Administration’s recent decision to sell eight nuclear-capable F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan, worth an estimated \$600 million, Sampat Shivangi, co-founder of the Republican Hindu Coalition, told **India-West**. The jets are being sold to Pakistan currently without Congressional review, though Congress could conceivably block the sale, noted Shivangi, a medical practitioner and long-time Republican heavy-weight.

Shivangi said the Coalition and its supporters are concerned about the proliferation of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal and its impact on the safety of India and its citizens. The RHC will lobby members of Congress in an attempt to block the sale, he said.

Shivangi said he was initially hesitant about joining a “Hindu”-named coalition. “But Gingrich changed my mind,” he stated, noting that the Coalition is open to Republicans of all faiths who have an interest in the India-U.S. relationship.

The Coalition will also lobby to increase trade and business connections between India and the U.S., Kumar told **India-West**, noting that India’s economy is one of the top 10 in the world – worth \$2 trillion – and growing in several sectors at a double-digit rate.

The RHC will focus on moving manufacturing facilities from China to India, said Kumar, adding that he is working with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu to create a new city – which will be known as Rana Reagan – devoted entirely to American manufacturing.

“We want American businessmen to feel as if they have come to San Jose, Calif.,” said Kumar, envisioning the new city, which will be home to 500,000 engineers and 2.5 million support staff and their families.

“Shalli, thank you so much for what you're doing,” McConnell told the businessman, according to The Hill Web site. The Senate Majority Leader noted how glad he was that India was moving away from socialism and toward free market principles.

RNC spokesman Ninio Fetalvo told **India-West**: “The RNC continues to welcome all efforts from Republicans to further engage Indian American communities across the country.”

“Community organizations help our party grow and play a significant role in giving Indian Americans the opportunity to express their ideas for the party,” said Fetalvo.