

## Republican Hindu Coalition launched in US for advancing community's cause

**Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, is the honorary chairman of the coalition**

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Indian-Americans looking to amplify their voice in US politics have launched Republican Hindu Coalition to bring the entire community on one platform and advance policies, including strengthening the Indo-US ties, important to the community members.

"Having watched the Republican Jewish Coalition RJC work to achieve its goals, and after conferring with many prominent Hindu Americans, I was inspired to found the RHC (Republican Hindu Coalition)," the group's founder Shalabh 'Shalli' Kumar said in his inaugural address.

Led by Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, top Republican leaders including Senator Mitch McConnell, Pete Sessions, Chairman of House Rules Committee and Ed Royce, Chairman of House Foreign Affairs Committee, blessed the formation of the coalition on Tuesday night.

"RHC will build a common unified platform so that Hindu Americans have a voice, a big voice on the policy tables of both the United States and India," said Kumar.

The meeting among others was addressed by Congressman George Holding, Co-Chair of the Congressional India Caucus and Rodney Davis.

"India's economy is growing faster than any other and given its size, such growth has a huge impact on trade and prosperity all over the world. India's position of leadership in the region makes it United States' greatest and most important allies," Kumar said as lawmakers after lawmakers pledged to work towards the strengthening of India US relationship.

"The election of Narendra Modi as India's new Prime Minister, showed a dramatic shift on the part of India's populace toward an ideology that values more economic freedom and opportunity with limited smaller government," Kumar said.

"These are values shared by the Republican Party in the United States. Given shared commitments to 4F principles : Free enterprise, Fiscal discipline, strong Family values and Firm Foreign policy, I believe it is our duty as successful and influential Hindu Americans to ensure that the ties between India and the United States, the world's two largest democracies, grow even stronger," he said.

Dr Sampat Shivangi, a leading Republican Indian-American described this as a "historic event" noting that there is need for a powerful uniting voice for the community.

"This is a new venue. It would definitely increase the strength and bond between the two nations," he said.

In his address, Shivangi said initially he had apprehension about using the name Hindu in the coalition as a time when sharp debate is ongoing in India on religious intolerance.

"But when Newt Gingrich as a Christian can become part of it, why can't I," he told the audience.

Gingrich is the honorary chairman of the Republican Hindu Coalition.

"I think launching an organisation like the RHC could literally change history," Gingrich said.