

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
Congressman John Garamendi
November 2014 Elections

Please answer the following questions and return the questionnaire by April 30, 2014 via email to questionnaire@americansikhcommittee.org. Feel free to answer at length or succinctly. However, it should be noted that all questions call for a 'yes' or 'no' answer prior to any explanation.

American Sikhs report that they endure increased scrutiny due to discriminatory profiling at airports around the United States by law enforcement.

1. Do you support the proposed federal End Racial Profiling Act?

Yes. I am proud to cosponsor the End Racial Profiling Act. Racial profiling has no place in our society. We are strongest as a nation when everyone is treated equally under the law and when no one is prejudged based on race or ethnicity.

2. Do you support adding a prohibition on profiling on the basis of religion to the United States Justice Department Guidance on Racial Profiling?

Yes. Almost every American of every faith is a loyal America. Religious profiling only serves to breed distrust and unfounded hatred.

School bullying acutely affects American Sikh school children. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights heard testimony that that a large majority of Sikh school children experience bullying and harassment in schools.

3. Do you support the proposed federal Safe Schools Improvement Act?

Yes. I am proud to cosponsor the Safe Schools Improvement Act. The federal government can do more to stamp out bullying in our public schools. Every child deserves to be educated in a safe and supportive environment.

In the United States, American Sikhs are barred from service in the US military unless they remove their religiously-mandated turban and cut religiously-mandated uncut hair. Over the past five years, the United States Army has made one-time, individual exemptions for three Sikh soldiers, allowing them to maintain their religiously-mandated turbans and uncut hair. Similarly, the Washington DC Police Department made a change in policy to allow any Sikh police officer to serve with his or her turban and uncut hair.

4. Do you support a change in United States military policy so that Sikhs would have an opportunity to serve our military while maintaining their turbans and uncut hair without requiring them to seek special, hard to obtain, revocable accommodations in order to do so?

Yes. Our military is strengthened when servicemembers come from a broad spectrum of religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. Religious exemptions on facial hair and head covering should be easy to obtain.

5. Will you encourage law enforcement agencies in your Congressional district to allow Sikhs to serve as police officers without removing their religiously-mandated turbans and uncut hair?

Yes. Such prohibitions serve no purpose. It strengthens local law enforcement to have a force that represents the diversity of the communities they serve and protect.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of anti-Sikh pogroms in India. In the first week of November 1984, at least 3,000 Sikhs were killed in New Delhi alone. 1 2 3 Government officials, law enforcement officers, and military forces failed to prevent or participated in the slaughter. 4 In many documented incidents, public officials distributed voter lists and weapons used to locate and kill Sikh men, women, and children.5 Most of the perpetrators of the pogroms have not been brought to justice6 and many have flourished in government and political party positions.7

6. Do you agree that thousands of Sikhs were murdered in India in November 1984 with the assistance of or lack of intervention by political parties, law enforcement, military or members of the government?

Yes. We must never forget this atrocity.

7. Would you, as a Member of Congress, seek to remember and acknowledge the pogroms against Sikhs in November 1984, pursue justice for the victims, and work to ensure it does not happen again?

Yes. Honoring the victims and acknowledging the tragedy is the least we can do.

As a community, we understand that our elected officials may have limited exposure to Sikhs and Sikhism. However, it is helpful in our evaluation to understand to what extent you may have an existing relationship or set of experiences with Sikhs.

8. Have you ever worked with, employed or been hired by a Sikh? If so, describe this experience.

Yes. Throughout my decades in public service, I've had the opportunity to work with many Sikh Americans. I've represented sizable Sikh communities for many years, as a Member of Congress, statewide official, and State Senator. In Congress, I am the co-chair and co-founder of the American Sikh Congressional Caucus, and I've joined in support of many bills and resolutions backed by the Sikh community.

Currently, Sikh farmers serve on my Agricultural Advisory Committee and professional Sikh women serve on my Women's Advisory Committee. My office has also had several Sikh interns over the years. I believe I have a good understanding of the Sikh community's priorities and concerns based on my longstanding friendships and relationships in the Sikh community.

9. Have you ever visited a Gurdwara (Sikh house of worship)?

Yes. I have visited Gurdwaras on multiple occasions. My wife and I first visited the Harmandir Sahib in the 1970s.

10. Do you encourage Sikhs to apply for opportunities with your government office or campaign office, including internships through the SikhLEAD Internship program? If so, please describe the process by which one may seek employment or internships with these offices, including the name, address and telephone number of the person with hiring responsibility.

Absolutely. My campaign will be hiring several field staff over this summer and fall. My government office is currently soliciting applications for a full time caseworker focused on veterans issue, and other opportunities emerge periodically. We also have internships in the government offices (both Washington, DC and district) that cycle through every summer, fall, winter, and spring. I'd love to learn more about the SikhLEAD internship program. For campaign opportunities, please e-mail Andrew Kim at atrumankim@gmail.com. For opportunities in my government office, please e-mail Elly Fairclough at elly.fairclough@mail.house.gov.