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**SACRED Acts Launches Illinois Nonviolence Pledge as 50+ Elected Officials and Candidates Commit to Reject Extremist-Linked Contributions from the R.S.S. and its affiliates**

**CHICAGO, IL** — More than 50 Illinois elected officials have [signed the SACRED Acts Nonviolence Pledge](#), committing to reject campaign contributions tied to anti-democratic, supremacist, and extremist agendas, organizers announced Thursday at a press conference in Chicago.

The event, hosted by SACRED Acts (South Asian American Coalition to Renew Democracy Acts) in partnership with Hindus for Human Rights Action and Muslim Civic Coalition, featured human rights activist and author **Tushar Arun Gandhi**, the great-grandson of Mohandas Gandhi, alongside Illinois lawmakers and community leaders.

The pledge establishes three commitments for elected officials and candidates:

- Reject political violence and intimidation
- Refuse donations linked to the anti-democratic group behind Gandhi's assassination, the [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh](#) (RSS), and its affiliates
- Return or redirect extremist-linked contributions to pro-democracy organizations

Organizers say the pledge comes amid documented efforts by extremist networks to influence [democratic systems in the U.S.](#) and Illinois.

Over the past decade, anti-democratic South Asian American actors have funneled more than \$2.5 million dollars into Illinois political campaigns across both parties with funding tied to movements that promote religious supremacy, caste discrimination, authoritarian governance and increasingly allies with white supremacist leaders.

New research from the prestigious [Sciences Po Paris university in France](#) demonstrates the reach of these groups in the U.S. The research names [multiple R.S.S. linked groups in Illinois](#), including the Republican Hindu Coalition, a group that named [Steve Bannon a co-chair in 2019](#).

Speakers framed the pledge as a proactive step to safeguard democratic institutions before extremist ideologies further normalize political violence and intimidation.

“Today we announce a multifaith and multiracial coalition of over 50 elected officials and candidates who stand with us to say that our democracy will not be bought by billionaires and their extremist agendas,” said Pushkar Sharma, Executive Director of SACRED Acts.

Illinois lawmakers who signed the pledge said rejecting extremist-linked money is essential to maintaining public trust.

“As the son of Indian immigrants and the first Indian American elected to the Illinois General Assembly, I've seen a rise in hate, violent rhetoric, and extremist ideology affecting our communities here in Illinois and across our country, including caste-based discrimination and religious supremacy that too often go unchallenged. This pledge is a necessary defense against the normalization of extremism. When communities stand together, we are stronger and safer,” said Senator Ram Villivalam.

“From the U.S. to India to Europe, supremacist movements are coordinating across borders, using fear, nationalism, and state violence to erode democracy — often starting with immigrants and dissenters. Illinois has a responsibility to lead: to stand with immigrant communities, to reject extremism in all its forms, and to commit to a democratic future rooted in nonviolence, accountability, and collective liberation,” said Senator Graciela Guzmán.

“In this moment we need leaders who understand a shared sense of struggle and a democracy that has equal rights for all. I signed on to this because it's going to take all of us to have the courage to fight back against the rise in nationalism in this country,” said Senator Robert Peters.

“The pledge we took doesn't ask for much. It asks that we not accept money from anti-democratic movements, from groups that endorse fascism, and from groups that encourage violence. That's not an outlandish request. For anyone vying to represent the people of Illinois, that should be a given,” said Bushra Amiwala, member of the Skokie District 73.5 Board of Education.

In closing, Tushar Gandhi stated that “Today we live in very perilous times where democracy is being pushed back and it seems that democratic principles are on the backfoot.” He further emphasized that “The time has come to fight back against the forces that do not have ethics or morality on their side – but we and that gives us a greater strength and the authority to fight back.”

Organizers stressed that the effort is nonpartisan and a multi-faith initiative focused on strengthening democratic norms.

SACRED Acts continues to call on elected officials across Illinois, the midwest, and the country to sign the pledge and publicly commit to rejecting contributions tied to anti-democratic South Asian actors such as the R.S.S. and its affiliates.

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## **About SACRED Acts**

SACRED Acts is a multifaith, multiracial, multigenerational 501(c)(4) nonpartisan nonprofit that organizes community power through civic engagement to build an inclusive democracy. Learn more at [sacreddemocracy.org](https://sacreddemocracy.org).