



***Governor's Commission on South Asian American Affairs***  
***SPS-1 Meeting Minutes***  
***January 21, 2026***

Commission Attendance: **Yes** **No**

Obaid Ahmad, Member  
Dr. Bishal Bhandari, Member  
Arti Bhatt, Member

Dr. Ahmad (Raza) Khan, Member  
Preeti Menon, Member  
Dr. Ahmed Nawaz, **Vice Chair**  
Nivea Ohri, Member  
Sushma Pakalapati Potluri, Member

Fahim Rafiq, Member  
Dr. Faisal Quader, Member  
Amarjeet Singh Sandu, Member  
Devang Mukand Shah, Member  
Aman Kaur Shergill, Member  
Gurpreet Singh Takhar, **Chair**  
Archana Dipak Thakker, Member

**GOCI Staff:**

Gregory Yancey – Chief of Staff  
Christina Poy – Administrative Director of SAA Affairs Commission, GOCI  
Lisa Woodfolk – Administrative AD. for the Ethnic Commissions, GOCI

- **Call Order and Procedural Reminders at 6:07 p.m.**

*Preet Takhar, Chair, Governor's Commission on South Asian American Affairs*

○ **Opening Remarks**

*Chair Takhar reminded the commissioners of Robert’s Rules of Order.*

*Lisa Woodfolk took attendance of the meeting.*

With confirmation of the quorum, Chair Takhar recommended the review and vote for: 1) Adoption of this meeting’s Agenda and 2) Approval of the Minutes from meeting on November 12, 2025.

- No changes were made to the minutes.

<b>Adoption of the agenda.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Vote</b>	<b>Motion passed.</b>
	<b>Arti Bhatt</b>	<b>Archana Thakker</b>	<b>14 Y – 0 N – 0 A</b>	<b>YES</b>

<b>Adoption of the minutes.</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Vote</b>	<b>Motion passed.</b>
	<b>Vice Chair Ahmed Nawaz</b>	<b>Archana Thakker</b>	<b>14 Y – 0 N – 0 A</b>	<b>YES</b>

- Administrator Director Poy welcomed everyone to the New Year, and the first SAAA meeting for 2026. Director Poy mentioned since the last meeting she attended 13 meetings and four as a representative of the Governor’s Commission on South Asian American Affairs. The Commissioners attended one meeting and 2 community events of Commission. Director Poy encouraged the commissioners to engage in more events in 2026. She reminded commissioners to complete the **GOCI Request Event Form** before attending any events as a representative of the commission.
- Director Poy introduced Kate Thompson, the Assistant General Counsel who works for the State Ethics Commission.

Kate’s email address is [Katherine.thompson@maryland.gov](mailto:Katherine.thompson@maryland.gov)  
**Address: 45 Calvert Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Baltimore MD 21401**  
**Contact Information: 410-260-7770**

Kate provided the commissioners with training on their ethical responsibilities as commissioners, including what they cannot do (six conflicts of interest such as prestige of office) and what they can do (act in the best interest of the commission by promoting the community and what they bring to the State, as well as what they need from the State). Chief of Staff Gregory Yancey reminded the commissioners to submit their Event Request 14 days prior in the portal if they want to represent the Commission so that he and Executive Director Larry Walker can research the event to

make sure it's a bona fide event and it's not something that's controversial against the Administration's priorities.

AD Poy asked commissioners to cc Chair Takhar when emailing her information about the event invitations submitted in the Event Request Form portal.

## **GOCI Executive Order – Review**

There were no questions regarding the executive order.

### **○ GCSAAA Commission Bylaws – Review**

- Chair Takhar has requested that everyone review the bylaws, if there's any edits that you would like to make, please bring it forward to the commission.

### **○ Commissioner Events Check -In**

- 1) Commissioner Aman Shergill attended an event on MLK Day.
- 2) Commissioner Archana attended and presented the Governor's Citations at Mayur Modi's the ADG Youth Appreciation Day.

### **○ Commissioner Business**

Business Committee: Commissioner Faisal Quader helped Federal employees who were impacted by the furlough with training and marketable to find new jobs. He's ready to start planning for the next business event to organize a bigger conference. Commissioner Obaid Ahmad suggested that the commissioners become more involved in charitable activities.

- Community Committee: Commissioner Bhatt spoke about the well-attended Diwali at Government House and the success of reaching out to community partners for opportunities to contribute (i.e., catering and decoration). Commissioner Aman Shergill acknowledged Chair Preet Takhar, Commissioner Amarjeet Sandhu, Admin. Director Christina Poy and (GOCI) staff team for helping plan the successful and huge celebration of Vaisakhi all within less than three weeks. Christina Poy added that Commissioner Raza Khan's role in securing the venue as an in-kind partnership with Carroll Community College so that this being the first time a Vaisakhi celebration was ever held in Carroll County. Commissioner Khan added information about Carroll's growing South Asian population and the philanthropic donation to the college by a South Asian doctor for the Nagana Center of Innovation building where we hosted our event. Maryland 250 –
- Education Committee: Commissioner Raza Khan inquired about the outcome of the committee's legislative proposals and concerns. Chief of Staff Greg Yancey provided the update and offered to set up meetings with the superintendent. Commissioner Khan also suggested that someone from the younger generation "who goes beyond" (i.e., exemplary students) to be recognized with a plaque at every South Asian [commission] event. He asked if the commission's discretionary funds could be used for purchasing plaques.

- Health Committee: Commissioner Bishal Bhandari mentioned the state initiative “AHEAD Model” and proposed an idea about organizing a one-day town hall meeting between the state legislators, state health department officials and South Asian American doctors to understand the new AHEAD Model, how it will impact their day-to-day practice, as well as other policies that may impact Maryland physicians.
- Legislative Committee: Commissioner Devang Shah introduced Delegate Harry Bhandari, Chair of Maryland’s Asian American Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus, to speak about current legislative proposals that are going to affect the AAPI community.
- **New Business** – Postponed the “New Business” discussion to the next Strategic Planning Session to allow committees to meet.

○ **South Asian American Community Legislation Issues**

- Speaker: Delegate Harry Bhandari, PhD (Baltimore County)

Delegate Bhandari spoke about the South Asian Community, which faces a lot of challenges including language barriers, limited access to culturally-competent healthcare, housing insecurity, fear and uncertainty about immigrant status, more inclusive public health, ER wait time at hospitals, hate bias and discrimination, connecting to transit, schools and jobs.

○ **Public Announcements**

- Chair Takhar reminded commissioners to keep Maryland 250 in mind for any new events in 2026 to showcase the South Asian community’s commitment to Maryland. He also reminded the committee chairs to coordinate with AD Poy to have committee meetings prior to the next commission meeting.

○ **Adjournment**

<b>Motion</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>Vote</b>	<b>Passed: 8:00 pm</b>
<b>Adjourned</b>	<b>Preeti Menon</b>	<b>Faisal Quader</b>	<b>14 Y – 0 N – 0 A</b>	<b>Yes</b>