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**SOUTH ASIAN AMERICAN POLICY AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SAAPRI)
COMMENDS CHICAGO ALDERMEN ON RESOLUTION**

Chicago, IL – South Asian American Policy & Research Institute (SAAPRI) commends Chicago Aldermen Ameya Pawar, Deborah Silverstein, and Joe Moore for introducing a resolution addressing the recent violent attacks on Sikh and Muslim institutions and taking measures to promote tolerance. The resolution will be introduced at the Chicago City Council meeting on Wednesday, September 12, 2012. The September 12 meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m. with an invocation by Lakhwant Singh Komal, a local Sikh American religious leader.

“SAAPRI has appreciated the opportunity to take a lead in providing community input in the drafting of this resolution, and we look forward to working with the City of Chicago on additional measures that promote education about diverse cultures and keep our community safe,” said Ami Gandhi, executive director of SAAPRI.

“The Sikh invocation at the opening of the Chicago City Council is a historic and special event. The Sikh American community of Chicago appreciates both Alderman Ameya Pawar and SAAPRI for taking the initiative to make this happen. Further, the resolution confirms Mayor Emanuel’s and the City Council’s commitment to the freedom and respect of all people to practice their faith fearlessly. I am proud to say that I am a Sikh by faith, a Chicagoan, and a proud American,” said Rajinder Singh Mago, a Sikh community leader who also gave input on the resolution. Mr. Mago is also a trustee emeritus of the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions, founded in Chicago in 1893.

“This resolution is a statement about Chicago’s values and I felt it was important to call out some of the inflammatory rhetoric in public sphere – there are many elected and public officials that actively stoke these flames to further a political agenda. This is not right. We are all Americans regardless of where we come from, who we worship, and who we marry. Words have consequences and the Sikh Temple shooting or the vandalism at Mosques are a reflection of the rhetoric in the public sphere. This resolution seeks to restart a conversation – a conversation that is rooted in facts, compassion, understanding and one that promotes diversity. Mayor Emanuel is working to make Chicago the most immigrant friendly city in the nation – now our conversation must reflect that goal,” said Alderman Pawar.

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SAAPRI appreciates the contributions of numerous community organizations and individuals in the aftermath of the recent tragedies, including Council on American-Islamic Relations, Chicago Chapter (CAIR-Chicago), South Asian Americans Leading Together, Sikh Coalition, and Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund. “We must work together to combat against hate and violence because only then will we be able to achieve a peaceful, tolerant, and just society,” said Rabya Khan, staff attorney at CAIR-Chicago.

SAAPRI also commends Illinois House Representative Daniel Biss for introducing a similar resolution at the state level, with Representative Lou Lang serving as chief co-sponsor and Representatives Cassidy, Harris, Jakobsson, Nekritz, Crespo, Williams, and Mussman serving as co-sponsors. “I am proud to stand with the Chicago City Council in condemning in the strongest possible terms these hateful attacks. Racially motivated violence diminishes our whole society and all civic institutions must band together and state clearly that our region will never tolerate such outrages,” said Representative Biss.

SAAPRI is a non-profit, non-partisan organization established in 2001 to improve the lives of South Asian Americans in the Chicago area, by using research to formulate equitable and socially responsible public policy. SAAPRI will make the text of the resolution available on its website: www.saapri.org.

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