



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

## Senator Avella Holds Celebratory Press Conference on the Passage of Religious Corporation Bill Recognizing Hindu, Sikh and Islamic Faiths

ANDREI VASILESCU January 11, 2016



(Queens, NY) Today, State Senator Tony Avella stood with community leaders of the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh religious communities to celebrate the historic passage of his Religious Corporation bill into law. As per the passage of the bill, the Religious Corporations law in New York will now officially include the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh faiths.

Members of the Sikh community approached Senator Avella to discuss the glaring omission of these religious faiths from current New York statute. Despite recognizing more than twenty different religions, Sikhs were not able to incorporate under the New York Religious Corporations law.

Senator Avella immediately moved to introduce a bill in April of 2011, Senator Avella's first session in the New York Senate, to rectify this omission. He also included the Hindu and Muslim faiths that had also inexplicably been omitted from the Religious Corporations law. Avella has continued to introduce the bill every legislative session since 2011 and was finally able to achieve victory on November 20th, 2015, when Governor Andrew Cuomo signed his bill, as Chapter 468 of 2015 into law.

"There is no denying that New York is the melting pot of the United States. Needless to say, I was taken aback when the Sikh community informed me that, contrary to what you'd expect of this cultural hub, not all religions were recognized under the law. New Yorkers take pride in the plurality of faiths, creeds, and ethnicities within the State, so it only makes sense that New York's laws reflect that diversity and this country's principal of religious freedom. I am proud to announce that as of November 20th, it does not matter whether you are Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, or Christian; New York recognizes your right to organize and incorporate under the Religious Corporations law all the same," said State Senator Tony Avella.

"Religious institutions in the United States have been able to use the convenience of the corporate form for their basic business transactions, such as buying and selling property, entering into contracts, limiting liability, and setting forth the rights of their members. The Hindu, Muslim and Sikh faiths will now have these same basic privileges," said Assemblymember Jim Brennan.

“On behalf of The Hindu Temple Society of North America and all Hindus of New York State, we thank and applaud the Governor and the State Legislature , and in particular State Senator Tony Avella , for this landmark achievement that recognizes the civil and religious rights of not only Hindus but also Islamic and Sikh religions, said Dr. Uma Mysorekar, President of The Hindu Temple Society of North America.

“We are deeply thankful to Senator Avella for making a religious amendment in New York State legislature and bringing religious equality, secularism and equal rights for all religions,” said Vipul Patel, BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir.

“We are really thankful to Honorable State Senator Tony Avella to generate the Bill for Religious Corporation Law recognizing the Hindus, Sikhs, Islamic Faith Communities to amend the definition like "pandit, swami, guru, granthi, imam, moulvi, and maulana," said Sanjeev Jindal, Director of South Asian for Empowerment.

“State Senator Tony Avella has been the voice of our community as well as other minority groups in the Senate, and we could not thank him enough for his efforts to fight for our equal rights,” said Bhai Sajjan Singh, Granthi, Gurudwara Sant Sagar.

“As a South Asian Muslim female leader and a resident of the New York for over 30 years, time, concern and attention from Senator Tony Avella and Assemblyman Brennan gives the tremendous gift of peace and faith for every community. Every state should have this law in the United States” said Mazed A. Uddi, President of the South Asian Fund for Scholarship, Education & Training (SAFEST).