



Shefali Razdan Duggal

PRESS CLIPS

DNC appoints four desis to Philly convention committees

Alex Haifa

Democratic National Committee Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz has appointed party stalwarts and bundlers Smita Shah of Chicago, Shefali Razdan Duggal of San Francisco and Saif Khan of Washington, DC to the Rules Committee for the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia July 25-28, where the Presidential nominee will be formalized. Schultz also appointed physician-turned-entrepreneur-and-philanthropist Dr Sreedhar Potarazu of Bethesda, Maryland, to the Credentials Committee, another of the several standing committees at the convention. DNC rules provide for the Chair to appoint 75 party leaders and elected official members to the three Convention Standing Committees to serve in addition to and together with the over 160 members that are elected in every state to those same committees. 'This slate represents the great variety of perspectives, backgrounds and experiences that make up our party,' Schultz said. 'We wanted to make sure that the diversity of our party was reflected at the highest levels.'

Shah is president and chief executive officer of Spaan Tech, Inc, a multi-faceted engineering and construction management firm recognized for its expertise in public and private infrastructure. A licensed professional engineer, she has led Spaan Tech since its inception in 1998. She cut her teeth both professionally and politically under the tutelage of her father Niranjan Shah, also an engineer who ran one of the most successful engineering firms in Chicago, Globetrotter Inc. The senior Shah was well plugged in with the city and Democratic leadership and in the 1980s and 1990s was a leading fundraiser for the party, including the Clintons. In 1996 and 2004, Smita Shah was a delegate to the Democratic Convention and in 2000 and 2004 served on the DNC's Rules Committee. In 2012, she served as a Democratic National Convention parliamentarian.



Smita Shah



Shefali Razdan Duggal



Saif Khan



Dr Sreedhar Potarazu

Shah was recently named by the Clinton campaign's Asian American and Pacific Islander Leadership Council as was Duggal, who also serves on the National Finance Committee for 'Hillary for America 2016' and is a 'Hillblazer,' for raising several hundred thousand dollars for the campaign. In 2008 and 2012, she was also a major fundraiser for Barack Obama's campaigns. And last year Obama appointed her to the US Holocaust Memorial Council, which supervises the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, for a term expiring in January 2018. Although both Shah and Duggal are all-in' for Clinton, their DNC work and 'Hillary for America' work are two different entities since the DNC is overseeing all three primary candidates — Clinton, US Senator from Vermont Bernie Sanders and former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley. They are not supposed to be aligned with any one of them, until the nominee has been determined. Shah could not be reached for comment at press time, but Duggal spoke of how "honored, privileged, humbled and grateful" she was for the nomination. "I enthusiastically will be helpful to the DNC and the Convention, overall, within this capacity, and any others which the DNC will ask or need of me," Duggal told India Abroad. "I hope to bring to the table the very best version of myself, and will be ready, willing and able to do what is helpful within the effort and the Democratic Party."

"As with all things," she said, "I attempt to be the most positive representation of myself and my culture, whether personal or professional."

"My father told me when I was a very young child growing up in Cincinnati, Ohio — and at the time there weren't many Indians in the area in the 1980s — that I may be the only desi that non-South Asians may experience or see, and for that reason to be the most ideal version of myself. To be a positive representation of integrity, hard work, positive attitude, kindness," Duggal said.

"Effectively," she pointed out, "to be such an affirmative experience to nondesis, that they will think and believe all desis are like that. I take that advice very seriously, and implement it within all things I am involved in, as it is a gentle reminder to always be the best version of myself, in my thoughts, emotions, actions and behavior."

"Fortunately," Duggal said, "there are so many fantastic desis who have employed this same thought and paved the way before me, and also will now be serving with on the Standing Committees. We can all work to... represent how effective our culture can truly be within American politics, and all capacities."

“This appointment is a very accurate description of the American Dream,” she added. “I grew up as a lower middle-class child of a single mother who worked two minimum wage jobs to support us... and look at how God has graced us. This country is a dream come true.” Khan, the third Indian American on the committee, is an Iraq war veteran and founder of Khanactions, which specializes in placing US veterans with employment opportunities. He also serves on the DNC’s Veterans and Military Families Council.

Dr Sreedhar Potarazu — an ophthalmologist by training, founder of Enziime, a software company focused on providing data science applications to assess health-care delivery — is not a major fundraiser/bundler like Shah or Duggal. But he has been a contributor and donor to the Democratic Party and President Obama’s election campaigns. “I’ve always taken the position of encouraging partisanship and cooperation across the aisle,” Dr Potarazu told India Abroad. “I am a firm believer that the best way for the country to move forward, is for both sides of the aisle, to start working together in solving the country’s issues and instilling confidence once again in the American people.

“My willingness to work with the DNC process is less on politics and more focus on the importance of preserving a legacy,” he added. “I have supported people and not parties. I have had the opportunity over the past few years to get to know President Obama and his vision at a very personal level, and it has been deeply inspiring to understand what drives him. It is for this reason that I agreed to participate to help preserve his great contributions, but I will continue to be a champion for how leaders on both sides can come together towards their common cause. “I always aspire to be perceived as a statesman who focuses on the positive attributes of leadership and mutual cooperation.”

“I have also supported both President Clinton and Secretary Clinton for many years and know them both,” he added. “I don’t know Bernie Sanders as well, but remain neutral on the candidate.”

Over the years Dr Potarazu said he has also supported Republican leaders, including former Speaker Newt Gingrich and current Speaker Paul Ryan. “I consider myself a little bit right of center where most of the country is, but I remain focused on supporting the person rather than an affiliation,” he reiterated. “My hope is that both parties can come together the country becomes less divisive.”