

RAVI BHALLA

HOBOKEN CITY COUNCIL

Background

Ravinder Singh Bhalla is a Councilman-at-Large and has served two terms as Council President for the City of Hoboken. Ravinder was born and raised in New Jersey, is married to Navneet Kaur, and they have two children, Arza Kaur and Shabegh Singh.

Ravinder received his undergraduate education from the University of California at Berkeley, where he received a B.A. in Political Psychology. Upon graduation, he attended the London School of Economics (L.S.E.) in the United Kingdom and received a Master of Science degree in Public Administration and Public Policy. He earned a Juris Doctor Degree from Tulane Law School in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Political Experience

During his term, Councilman Bhalla has served as Council President of the City of Hoboken from 2011-2012 and 2015-2016, Council Vice-President from 2010-2011 & 2013-2014 and Chairman of the Hoboken Democratic Party from 2010-2011. Prior to his service as a Councilman, Mr. Bhalla served as a local Democratic Committeeman for the 2nd Ward, 3rd District of Hoboken from 2007-2009.

During these terms, Councilman Bhalla successfully worked with the Mayor and Council to reduce property taxes by 12% and turning around the City's credit rating from junk bond status to AA+. Running on a platform of rooting out corruption and restoring honest government, Bhalla has successfully advocated for the acquisition of over 8 acres for parks and open space. He is co-chair of the Citizens Advisory Committee of the Rebuild by Design project, a \$230 million federally funded project to permanently protect the City of Hoboken from the effects of coastal flooding and climate change.

Councilman Bhalla originally ran in 2009 and received the **highest number of votes as a first-time candidate, and was easily re-elected in 2013**. He is endorsed by Mayor Dawn Zimmer, who stated,

"Ravi is my most trusted ally on the Council. He was integral as Council President in leading the process to save our hospital, preserving over 1,000 jobs and an integral health care service for our community. Hoboken is especially proud of Ravi as the first Asian elected official in Hudson County history and the only Sikh elected official in New Jersey. He was instrumental in implementing changes in Hoboken's Police Department that guarantee Sikh Americans an equal opportunity to serve in our police department."

Currently, Mr. Bhalla is an attorney-at-law with offices in Rochelle Park, where he practices in the **areas of employment law, civil rights law, local government law and criminal defense in the federal and state courts of New Jersey and New York**.

Ravinder's Public Service Reflection:

"There's a very direct connection between my public service as a Sikh Council Member in Hoboken, New Jersey, and two central tenets to my religious faith as a Sikh – Kirat Karo and Vand Chakho. It's integral for a Sikh's work life to be grounded in hard work and honesty. Today, there are not enough "good people" in politics, meaning people who are sincere, honest and willing to work hard for the betterment of the community. Much of this has to do with the fact that there is so much corruption, patronage and ineptitude in politics. The corrosion of political systems drives good people away from serving in elected office. Who in the world would want to have to raise large amount of money, sacrifice time with family, have their good name dragged through the mud publicly, all for an opportunity to serve and help the community?"

I strongly believe we need to push against these disincentives and encourage sincere and competent citizens to run for office, including those that embody the Sikh traits of leading an honest and hard working life. Together with this principle is the one of sharing with others – more specifically, seeing the connection between your own existence and those around you. To me, that is what public service in elected office is all about – utilizing whatever skills you are given by your Creator for the benefit of your community. In this case, my "community" right now is the residents of the City of Hoboken. I'm serving in elected office because as a Sikh, I want to use whatever abilities I've been given to benefit of my community, a concept that I derive from these two core Sikh principles." - Ravinder S. Bhalla

Public Policy achievements on behalf of the Sikh community, Asian Americans and other minorities in America include:

- On December, 2nd, in the aftermath of over 867 hate crimes and hate incidents nationwide, Councilman Bhalla wrote a Resolution bringing attention to these incidents against the African America, Muslim, Jewish, LGBTQ, Latino and immigrant communities, and called upon Hoboken officials to adopt and enforce a zero tolerance policy for such behavior in Hoboken. The Resolution was unanimously adopted by the City Council.
- Advocate and defender of women and girl's civil and human rights. Believes in equal status, dignity, and opportunity for all women and girls. Equal pay for equal work. Work environments that are welcoming and respectful of a woman's expertise and leadership.
- Led Asian American delegation in statewide legislative redistricting effort in 2010.
- Made changes to Hoboken Police Manual to ensure that Sikhs (and other persons with religious head coverings) are given equal opportunity to serve in the Hoboken Police Department. This is precedential and opens the door for other cities in New Jersey to let Sikhs serve in law enforcement.
- Successfully worked with Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop and Jersey City Director James Shea to recruit Sikh applicant to Jersey City Police Department. The applicant has been successful in the process so far and we anticipate he will be joining the Police Academy for basic training in January 2017.
- Authored and passed unanimous Resolution of the Hoboken City Council urging the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of Defense to lift its presumptive ban of Sikhs in the military and to let Sikhs serve in the military.
- Regularly provide internal support to Sikh Coalition in army campaign by introducing them to New

Jersey elected officials for lobbying purposes (Senators and Members of Congress) as and when strategic issues have arisen over the years.

- Residual effect of having a Sikh elected official – there's an unquantifiable positive benefit to Sikhs and Sikh children to have a turbaned Sikh in a position of authority and power in government through elected office. There is a powerful and positive benefit to the Sikh community, to have an identifiable Sikh with statewide recognition who is holding elected public office.