

Mr. Stephen DeMaura, President
Americans for Job Security
107 South West Street, PMB 551
Alexandria, VA 22314

May 7, 2010

Re: Americans for Job Security Campaign Advertisement Regarding Outsourcing in Arkansas Senate Race

Dear Mr. DeMaura:

We, the undersigned immigrant and civil rights non-partisan organizations within the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, write to express our concerns over a recent television advertisement issued by Americans for Job Security (AJS) during the U.S. Senate race in Arkansas. We are extremely disappointed that this advertisement perpetuates stereotypes of South Asians taking jobs away from Americans, which can fuel racism and animosity towards community members. We urge your organization to refrain from running this advertisement.

The television advertisement¹, which began running online and in Arkansas since at least April 2010, features actors who are intended to appear South Asian, based upon their skin tone, dress and accents. With scenes of India and traditional South Asian music in the background, the actors proceed to “thank” Senate candidate and current Arkansas Lieutenant Governor Bill Halter for outsourcing Arkansan jobs to Bangalore, India.

This advertisement raises serious concerns about perpetuating racial stereotypes that can have grave consequences. In fact, the Asian American community is frequently blamed for the economic woes that this country has faced. The result of such scapegoating can be severe, as evidenced by the murder of Vincent Chin. In 1982, Chin, a Chinese-American, was killed in Detroit by individuals who declared their anger about manufacturing jobs in the United States being lost to Japan. By playing on similar racial biases and stereotypes, this advertisement fosters the perception that individuals in South Asia are benefiting from American layoffs and outsourcing abroad and can foster discrimination and violence against immigrant communities in the United States. Public sentiment about the nature and function of outsourcing, in particular, have led to racism and bias against South Asians in the United States, who are viewed as being connected with layoffs and job losses that are seen as benefiting India. Consequently, South Asians, both in the U.S. and abroad, have felt the sting of racist comments and hatred.

The Asian American community has often been subjected to xenophobic rhetoric and this is unfortunately true even in the political realm. In fact, over the past ten years, South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT), a non-partisan non-profit immigrant and civil rights organization, has observed an alarming increase in xenophobic statements in political discourse. SAALT has compiled a range of comments and statements targeting South Asians, Muslims, and Sikhs (please refer to the enclosed documents entitled *Addressing and Responding to Bias*

¹ “Thank You”, Americans for Job Security Advertisement. Available at <http://www.savejobs.org/mediacenter.php?qseg=19>.

Related to Outsourcing and Community Education on Documented Incidents of Xenophobia and Intolerance in Political Discourse²).

We hope that your organization will not promote messages based on racist perceptions and stereotypes. In order to prevent the range of consequences addressed in this letter, we urge you to refrain from using the advertisement online and on television.

We look forward to a dialogue with your organization about this advertisement. Please contact Priya Murthy, Policy Director of South Asian Americans Leading Together, at (301) 270-1855 or priya@saalt.org.

Sincerely

Asian American Justice Center (AAJC)
Japanese American Citizens League (JAACL)
National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)
OCA – Embracing the Hopes and Aspirations of Asian Pacific Americans
South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)

Disclosure: The signatory organizations are non-profit non-partisan organizations and neither support nor oppose any political party or candidate running for public office.

² Part I of the report includes xenophobic remarks made against the South Asian, Muslim, and Sikh communities, generally, available at http://www.saalt.org/attachments/1/Xenophobia%20Community%20General%20October%2020082_.pdf. Part II of the report includes xenophobic remarks made against South Asian, Muslim, and Sikh candidates seeking political office, available at http://www.saalt.org/attachments/1/Xenophobia%20Community%20SA%20Candidates%20October%2020082_.pdf.