Dear APPNA members,

APPNA is at rendezvous with a crucial moment particularly in its history. At no other time, it has been more important to be the beacon of hope and positive action, given the current grueling circumstances and a gradually increasing wave of Islamophobia due to ignorance and bigotry. This is the high time that we, as the most influential and resourceful of the Pakistani diaspora, unify our energies to show the true face of our identity which is the message of peace. As great Nelson Mandela once said “No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, his background or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite”.

The great works are performed not only by strength but by perseverance. The past two years have seen me serve APPNA as the Treasurer and Secretary to the best of my abilities. APPNA has come a long way since its inception 40 years ago, but it has focused primarily on helping Pakistanis in Pakistan and more recently, helping young Pakistani physicians getting adjusted in the USA. APPNA has enormous potentials yet to be utilized to its maximum. It's time to bring a sense of ownership, to develop new leadership and increase its membership. The need is more now than ever before. The uniqueness of APPNA is its chapters and component societies which represent us all across the United States. As physicians we have been endowed with a gift of healing and privilege of earning the trust of common people of any society. This gift can be utilized to bridge this gap.

The events of this past year have clearly demonstrated the dire need for our involvement in the NA part of APPNA. I have dedicated myself to service and helping transition APPNA into this modern era of enormous challenges and opportunities. With that major idea in mind, I want to announce my candidacy for President-Elect of APPNA 2017.    
  
The democratic setup of the organization with Chapters in most big cities of the country, we have the unique ability to help our fellow Americans in need, of not just better healthcare but also a better life in general. As President, my goal would be to establish free clinics through the Local chapters and help encourage other ideas that membership may have for a seamless integration of Pakistani Muslims in America. I would encourage our youth to do their part in being a useful member of the society we live in.

We need to be more involved with the local school boards, city council for example. We need to be seen as the part of the fabric of our community and society and the part of the main stream USA.   
  
Of course, our efforts to help our Pakistani brothers back home will continue unabated.    
Finally, what better way to be a part of this community than to be generous with our less fortunate fellow Americans during this holiday season not just by donating money, but also by donating our time, emotions and actions.

I am planning to listen to a lot of our colleagues and friends but not listening to the folks with vested interests and ambassadors of pessimism. I am asked by grass root APPNA members that whether their votes actually count towards changing the culture of APPNA? My answer is….. There is only one way to make your vote count and that is to vote for what you want and to vote for what you believe in. We should never let the odds keep us from doing what we know in our heart were meant to do.

I wish you all a happy holiday season and a happy new year and look forward to your support in bringing about the changes I mentioned above. I look forward to serving you as the President of APPNA 2017.

Warm Wishes for a peaceful and healthy New Year, God bless Pakistan and God bless United States of America.

Shahid Rashid, MD