Dear Chairperson Jean Firstenberg,

The Hindu American Foundation (HAF), a national, non-profit advocacy organization for the Hindu American community, proposes to the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee, the issuance of a stamp recognizing the Hindu holiday of Diwali. Diwali, the Festival of Lights, is celebrated by over two million in U.S. alone, and one billion worldwide, Hindus, Jains and Sikhs alike. Diwali, generally falling in the months of October or November, celebrates the victory of good over evil and knowledge over ignorance and is universally symbolized by the lighting of lamps. Its significance to Hindus, Jains and Sikhs is akin to Christmas for Christians or Hanukkah for Jews. The U.S. Postal Service (USPS) has honored the Christian, Jewish and Muslim American communities through corresponding religious holiday stamps over the years. The time is now ripe for the USPS to similarly honor Hindu Americans (along with Jain and Sikh Americans), who are just as much a part of the fabric of American society, with a Diwali stamp commemorating this significant holiday and highlighting the communities’ contributions to this nation and to the world at large.

In 2007, the US Congress highlighted the importance of Diwali by passing House Resolution 747 and Senate Resolution 299 to recognize "the religious and historical significance of the festival of Diwali." This bipartisan act of Congress demonstrates not only the importance of Diwali to Hindu Americans, but the permanent establishment and integration of the Hindu American community into this great nation. Hindu temples flourish alongside churches, mosques and synagogues. Hindu Americans have been integral to developments within the fields of medicine, technology, science, and business. Although comprising less than 1% of the US population:

- almost 40% of the start ups in Silicon Valley were by Hindu Americans
- over 35% of real estate in the hospitality sector - amounting to an estimated market value of $40 billion - is owed by Hindu Americans
- over 5% of the scientists, engineers and software specialists in the U.S. are Hindu Americans
- approximately 5% of all physicians in the U.S. are Hindu Americans

Finally, as an organization, the Foundation provides a credible voice for the Hindu American community and works on its behalf to educate leaders in public policy, media and academia about Hinduism and global issues concerning Hindus. From major international and national media outlets to academic and interfaith panels; in congressional briefings and before the U.S. Supreme Court, HAF has been a dependable representative, delivering a progressive Hindu American perspective. So in continuing in that vein, the Hindu American Foundation respectfully requests the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee to issue a Diwali stamp to recognize the establishment, integration and significant contributions of the two million strong Hindu, Jain and Sikh American communities.

Thank you,

Sheetal Shah
Director of Development
Hindu American Foundation