



# Kusum Rawat, champion against domestic violence, passes away



P RAJENDRAN

When it came to funding the campaign against domestic violence, Kusum Rawat did not care who she approached for donations. Even when she was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, she could not turn inward long enough to get depressed about it.

Rawat, a heroine for victims of domestic violence, died July 31, after she fell in her home. She was 72.

Though she had degrees in political science and law from India, she never practiced law.

Describing her to caregivers of Parkinson's patients, her husband Pramud Rawat once said: 'My wife was never depressed or in a bad mood because she spent most time worrying not about her problems.'

Besides Parkinson's disease, she also had debilitating osteoporosis that weakened her bones, he said.

"I don't remember a single day she was depressed. She was amazing," he said.

Pramud recalled that while Kusum is still remembered for being a past board member of the Domestic Violence Center of Howard County, she began her volunteer work organizing a Miss India US contest.

Encouraged by that success, she and her husband went on to help Indian composer Ananda Shankar organize an event at the prestigious Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, when no one would take charge. All the profits they made went to Maryland Public Television.

When DVC approached her, she initially worked only as a counselor.

Coming from a privileged background in Agra, as the eldest girl in the family, she had not seen the seamier side of life and grew up a tomboy. But as she saw what some abused women went through, she got more into fundraising for the DVC.

In their tributes, friends described her as an inveterate matchmaker and an ambassador for Indian culture within the mainstream community.

Besides her husband, she is survived by her son Dr Alok Rawat, her mother Angoori Devi, two brothers and two sisters.

Kusum Rawat



Virg Bernero

## Community throws weight behind Virg Bernero in Michigan

GEORGE JOSEPH

Though many Democratic candidates for the November election are reluctant to invoke the name of President Barack Obama, Virg Bernero, Mayor of Lansing, who is running for Michigan governor, has not lost his faith in the President.

"I am tying my faith with the President. He is not giving up on Michigan; we are not giving up on him," Bernero, a favorite of the Indian-American community, told *India Abroad*.

Obama's bold decisions enabled Michigan's auto industry, which was struggling when President George W Bush left office, to rebound, he noted.

Bernero, who faces Republican candidate Rick Snyder in November, said he has revamped the campaign after the primary win to add more firepower. As elsewhere, jobs and the economy are the major issues in the election in Michigan too. He said he wants an economy not focused on Wall Street but on the middle and lower rungs of the population.

Bernero promised to appoint Indians in senior positions in the administration. He will give adequate representation to all groups if elected. As mayor, he did the same thing. "The diversity should reflect in the administration. It will roll back any kind of discrimination. It will stamp out many problems too," he said.

He believes domestic manufacturing is crucial for development and plans to encourage it.

In his view, relations with China are very important, while relations with India are special.

While the people in China are wonderful, the same cannot be said about the government, he said, adding that it was not the case with India.

"Over the last decade," said Dr Chathapuram S Ramanathan, founding chairman, Michigan Indo-American Democratic Caucus, "Bernero has interacted with the diverse Indian-American community, and is a visible participant in our community events, and our places of worship, because of his commitment to inclusiveness. He admires the Indian-American community for giving education high priority. He is keen to improve the education system statewide, and is keen to involve Indian Americans in that process." Son of Italian immigrants, Bernero, as the mayor of Lansing, has balanced the city budget for five years in a row, cutting expenditures without compromising public safety.

"He is a friend of the immigrant community, and is sensitive to issues that are important to the Indian-American community, which is the largest group among Michigan's Asian Americans," said Ramanathan.

In an earlier fundraiser by the Indian-American community, Bernero promised to lead a trade delegation to India. He said tax incentives have attracted Hollywood to come to Michigan and invited Bollywood also to utilize the same facilities and tax breaks.

"I am definitely going to highlight the strengths in Michigan and the tax advantages, so Bollywood can tap into what Michigan has to offer. Let me tell you that as governor I will make Michigan Bollywood friendly," he had said.