

March 3, 2003

Akin Condemns Second Firebombing of West County Temple

ST. LOUIS, MO- On Saturday, March 1, the Hindu Temple at 725 Weidman Road in West St. Louis County suffered minor damage when a firebomb was thrown through a window. A similar attack produced some damage when a container of flammable liquids was thrown against the metal temple doors February 23.

“It is deeply troubling to see a second egregious attack against a place of worship in our community and I condemn this as not only crime against property, but as an assault on our most cherished American values,” said U.S. Rep. Todd Akin. “Such behavior is intolerable and I would encourage anyone who has any information regarding this crime to contact the proper authorities.”

After the first attack, Congressman Akin decried the senseless act and sent a letter to the temple that stated, in part:

“I was deeply troubled by news that the temple had been subject to a firebombing. This violent act was an assault not only on you and your congregants but on the values of religious freedom and mutual respect that are foundational to American society.

“The Constitution of the United States affirms that there can be no ‘religious test’ for officeholding in our country. The principle underlying this tenet is that the allegiance to a particular religion makes one no more or no less American. Instead, our Founders affirmed that all of us ‘are created equal, and are endowed by (our) Creator with certain unalienable rights.’ This is the central affirmation of American civic life, and when acts of religious bigotry occur in our nation, they violate the very heart of who we are as a people.

“Whether the firebombing of the temple was an act of religious hostility or simply the vicious act of a crude mind, it was morally wrong and a gross violation of those civil rights to which all Americans are entitled.

“Please know I am eager to help in any way I can as you address this most unfortunate occurrence. I would be happy to meet with any of you to discuss concerns you might have, and my staff in St. Louis and in Washington, D.C. will be glad to be of whatever assistance they can offer.”

In addition, Akin’s staff has contacted Temple leadership to offer support and assure Temple members the Congressman is eager to be of any assistance he can.