



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Elections: first Tibetan American elected major city mayor

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For the first time, an American of Tibetan and Indian descent will serve as mayor of a large US city.

Aftab Pureval, the son of a Tibetan mother and Indian father, won election yesterday, Nov. 2, 2021, as mayor of Cincinnati.

“Tonight, we made history,” he said after his victory.

Pureval, an Ohio native, was joined at the celebration by Drenko, his mother, and Avid, his brother. His father, Devinder, died in 2007.

“My story is improbably American,” Pureval said in 2018. “I am the son of a refugee. My mother was born in Tibet, and she was forced to flee her home country along with my grandparents.”

Tibetan American community

Pureval, 39, is considered a rising star in politics. He currently serves as clerk of courts for Hamilton County, Ohio, where Cincinnati is located. He first won election to that post in 2016 as a first-time candidate who upset a well-known incumbent.

In 2018, Pureval became the first Tibetan American to run for Congress when he entered the race for Ohio’s 1st Congressional District. Pureval received the endorsement of former US President Barack Obama. He eventually lost the race to incumbent Congressman Steve Chabot.

As mayor of Cincinnati, Pureval will be the highest-ranking Tibetan American official in US history.

His success reflects the growing strength of the Tibetan American community, which is increasingly raising its voice and contributing to US civil society.

Thanks in part to the advocacy of Tibetan Americans, the US Congress has deepened its support for Tibet in recent years, including by passing the Tibetan Policy and Support Act in 2020 and the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act in 2018.

ICT event

Highlighting his interest in his Tibetan community, in June this year, Pureval took part in the International Campaign for Tibet’s Tibetan Youth Leadership Program alongside other Tibetan Americans who have thrived in government and public service. The virtual program provided training for outstanding Tibetan American college and graduate students from across the country.

Earlier, in 2020, Pureval appeared on ICT’s Tibet Talks live conversation series, where he encouraged young Tibetan Americans to get involved in public service.

“People will tell you, just like they told me, that you’re too young, or you’re too inexperienced, or you’re too brown, or your accent is too strong, or your name is too funny,” he said. “There will be people who tell you that you can’t do it.

“And you know what? That is crap. The truth is you are exactly who we need in public service right now.”

The International Campaign for Tibet does not endorse candidates for office. ICT works with elected leaders from both parties to expand Congress’ many years of remarkable bipartisan support for Tibet.



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