

'Nikki Haley to respond to Obama's State of the Union address'

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Washington: Indian-American South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley would deliver the opposition Republican party's response to US President Barack Obama's last State of the Union address next week, Congressional leaders have said. Obama is scheduled to deliver his last annual State of the Union address to a joint session of the US Congress on January 12.

Incidentally, GOP's response to Obama's first State of the Union address was also by an Indian-American Bobby Jindal, the Louisiana Governor whose second term ends on January 11.

In a move that has the potential of propelling 43-year-old Haley to the national scene and make her a formidable vice presidential candidate, House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell yesterday announced that she will deliver the Republican address to the nation following the State of the Union on January 12.

"Nikki Haley has led an economic turnaround and set a bold agenda for her state, getting things done and becoming one of the most popular governors in America. In a year when the country is crying out for a positive vision and alternative to the status quo, Governor Haley is the exact right choice to deliver the Republican Address to the Nation," Ryan said.

"Nikki Haley is a proven leader and committed reformer who believes deeply in the promise of the country we all share. Not only has Governor Haley fought to bring opportunity and prosperity to the people of her state, but she's also demonstrated how bringing people together can bring real results," Senator McConnell said.

"Governor Haley knows the American Dream and wants to see every American share in it, and we're pleased that she will be delivering this year's Republican Address," McConnell said.

Haley said she is honoured to be asked by party leadership to deliver the Republican address to the nation. "This is a time of great challenges for our country, but also of great opportunities. I intend to speak about both," Haley said.

Haley, the 116th Governor of South Carolina, is the first female and the first minority governor in the state's history and currently the youngest governor in the country. She was re-elected to a second term in November last year. She is also only the second Indian-American Governor after Bobby Jindal.

In a statement, the Republican Party said Haley has delivered results to the people of South Carolina.

Under Haley's leadership, South Carolina's jobless rate hit record lows, the state announced more than 73,000 jobs in 45 of 46 counties, more than 25,000 South Carolinians moved from welfare to work, and the state made its largest infrastructure investment in a generation without raising taxes, the Republican party's statement said.

She brought together leaders of both political parties, educators and the business community to pass landmark education reforms. She has also increased transparency and accountability in state government and delivered tax relief for small businesses, pension reform and Medicaid reform, it said.

Born in Bamberg, the daughter of Indian immigrants, Haley's first job was keeping the books for her family's clothing store at the age of 13.

She went on to graduate from Clemson University with a BS degree in accounting. Haley and her husband Michael, a Captain in the Army National Guard and combat veteran who was deployed to Afghanistan's Helmand Province, attend Mt Horeb United Methodist Church in South Carolina.

According to the American laws, the President shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient.

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