

# Recognizing American **MUSLIM** Contributions in Our States



A community toolkit for passing counter Islamophobia resolutions that recognize the contributions of U.S. Muslims and reaffirm the right of every American to practice their faith within the law and free of government interference.

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CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understandin

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## Recognizing American Muslim Contributions in Our States Toolkit

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## **A Message from CAIR's National Executive Director**



As-Salamu Alaykum, Greetings of Peace:

Telling the story of who we are as American Muslims is one of the most powerful and effective ways to define our narrative as a community full of talented individuals.

American Muslims work hard every day in different fields and sectors in our society, from academia, to medicine, to engineering, to the arts, sports, politics, and much more.

Every day, we are making America stronger and better. It is time to make our society and elected officials better aware of our contributions and who we are as Americans.

CAIR's toolkit, "Recognizing American Muslim Contributions in Our States," was designed for this purpose.

This toolkit provides template state legislative resolutions that celebrate the contributions of American Muslims that may be introduced by Muslim community leaders, activists and concerned citizens with the support of interfaith partners, neighbors and political allies.

In turn, these resolutions will inoculate our state legislatures and communities from the threat of hostile or harmful resolutions or laws being introduced by the American Islamophobia network.

In advance, I thank you for your hard work to ensure that resolutions like these are adopted and knowledge of the contributions of American Muslims is enhanced.

**Executive Director**  
**Nihad Awad**

# DEFINING OURSELVES, OWNING OUR NARRATIVE



## One State at a Time

In 2012, CAIR released its first toolkit, “Securing Religious Liberty,” to challenge the American Muslim community to prevent agenda-driven anti-Islam legislation from undermining America’s ideals of free religious expression and to minimize government intrusion into personal religious affairs.

In the spirit of this call to action, CAIR is issuing “Recognizing American Muslim Contributions in Our States” encouraging Muslims and all other people of conscience to introduce a pair of state legislative resolutions that celebrates the contributions of Muslims and reaffirms the constitutional protections for religious freedom.

In offering these counter-Islamophobia resolutions, community members and activists can push back against the introduction unconstitutional and discriminatory “anti-Sharia,” “anti-foreign law” and “anti-Islamic Indoctrination” laws circulating in our nation’s state legislatures. We can introduce resolutions that: 1) recognize the contributions of Muslims in each state and nationwide, and 2) reaffirm the right of citizens to practice their faith within the law and free of government interference.

This toolkit will provides instructions on understanding the legislative process, sample resolutions that can be tailored to reflect the contributions of Muslims in their states, legislative fact sheets to back up these resolutions and a brief history of how other lawmaking bodies have introduced counter-Islamophobia resolutions in the recent past.

It is important that we as a nation challenge anti-Muslim fear-mongering in our states by reaffirming that Muslim citizens are welcomed and their civic contributions are recognized. By doing so, we will also reaffirm our shared history of embracing individuals’ right to practice the faith of their choice.

If today’s fear-mongers succeed in “protecting liberty” by stripping it from Muslims, then the next community targeted will have a much harder time defending itself. In preventing this erosion of American ideals, Muslims are in fact living the two core goals of Islamic principles (Sharia): to be a benefit to humanity and to prevent harm to humanity.

Every Muslim community in each state must take a stand. It is our obligation as Muslims to stand up against this injustice that threatens our nation, our faith and our community.

# UNDERSTANDING THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

## How a bill becomes law

A proposed law, or bill, can be introduced in either of a state legislature's two bodies, generally the House and Senate. The bill is then sent to the committee that has jurisdiction over the area the bill will impact. For instance, bills impacting civil liberties generally go to the Judiciary Committee.

The committee may choose to do nothing with the bill, thus "killing" it. Alternatively, expert witnesses may be brought in to discuss a bill's merits. The committee will vote on the bill. If it passes, it will be sent for a vote by the entire House or Senate. If passed, the bill is then sent to the other chamber where the above process is repeated. If the bill passes both chambers in different forms, it is sent to a conference committee. The conference committee is comprised of members of both chambers. Usually these members have some expertise relevant to the issue at hand. If the conference committee can agree to a compromise bill, this version is sent to both chambers and again subjected to a vote. If passed again, the bill is sent to the state's governor. The governor may veto (reject) the bill or sign it into law.

It is easier to challenge a bill when it is in a legislative committee than when it is on the floor of the State House or Senate. Speak with supportive legislators to learn about committee structures, membership and when a committee plans to consider a bill. It is important to speak with committee members in advance of this date.



# LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

Limits for Non-Profit Organizations,  
Rules for 501(c) (3) Organizations

- 501(c) (3) is one part of the tax law that provides for tax exemption for certain religious and educational institutions. In exchange for tax-exempt status, these institutions agree to abide by some limitations on their activities. (IRS Publication 557)
- Most mosques and Islamic centers are incorporated as 501c (3) tax-exempt institutions. Many organizations that serve the community also register as 501c (3) entities.
- A 501(c) (3) organization may opt for an H exemption, allowing it to engage in lobbying activities beyond an insubstantial amount, by filing IRS Form 5768.
- This information should not substitute for the advice of a qualified lawyer.

## Can a 501c3 support or oppose specific legislation?

Yes. IRS publication 1828 says you may engage in lobbying if it is not substantial part of your work. The IRS does not clearly define what constitutes a substantial part of your work, but court cases have indicated that less than 5 percent of the organization's total activity is acceptable and 16-20 percent is too much. Your organization is considered to be attempting to influence legislation (lobbying) if "it contacts, or urges the public to contact, members or employees of a legislative body for the purpose of proposing, supporting, or opposing legislation, or if the organization advocates the adoption or rejection of legislation.

NOTE: Resolutions, such as "Recognizing the Contributions of Our State's Muslim Citizens" or "Faith in Our State and Laws," are NOT legislation. A non-profit organization may work to support it without limit.

## What can officers and employees of a 501c (3) do outside of the organization?

Individuals who lead or work for 501c3 organizations may freely express themselves on political matters outside of their role with the organization. They may not be on the clock or using organization resources when so doing. Additionally, they must clearly state that they are acting in their individual capacity.





# CHECKLIST: MEETING WITH AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

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**1) Know Who You Need to Speak with:**

An Internet search for your state and “legislature”

(e.g. Virginia and legislature) will generally produce the web site for your state’s law making body. Identify a) your specific representatives, and b) the leadership of the committee most relevant to your need.

**2) Get Contact Information for the Member’s Scheduler:**

Call the official’s office and ask who to speak with about setting up a meeting. This is generally a scheduler. Get the proper spelling of this person’s name and e-mail address.

**3) Prepare a Written Request for a Meeting:**

Include the following information: the topic you wish to discuss at the meeting; names of those who will attend (if possible limit your group to no more than five), when you would like to meet and your contact information. It is best to offer a range of dates and to be flexible.

**4) Send Your Request:**

Send the request to the official’s office by email or through an online form provided by the office.

**5) Confirm the Request’s Receipt:**

Wait two business days and then call to confirm that your request was received.

**6) Be Politely Persistent:**

Be patient and flexible, it may take several calls to get a firm meeting time.

**7) Call the Day Before:**

Call the day before your appointment to reconfirm it.

# Ensuring an Effective Meeting with an Elected Official

- Ensure that everyone in your group knows and concurs with the desired outcome of the meeting
- Ensure that everyone in your group knows the main arguments you will use to support your request.
- Keep written materials brief.
- Be sure you have the contact information of the staff member you will follow-up after the meeting.

## Who will attend and what is their role?

In general, avoid delegations larger than five. Select people who will stay on message and discipline their emotions. Know in advance the job you want each member of your team to perform. Who will make introductions and start the discussion? Who will make your key points? Who will make your ask? Does anyone have a personal story to tell that will help make your case? Does anyone have the professional expertise or community position whose contribution to the meeting will strengthen your case?

## What is your outcome?

It is important to be clear about your purpose. Be specific in your requests and create the opportunity to follow up. For instance asking, “Will you vote in favor of legislation X?” or “Will you bring this point up during debate on the House floor?” are examples of specific requests. Make sure you have a name and contact information so you can follow-up. If you are in a position to organize a town hall with Muslim constituents, this is a good time to invite the official to visit the community.



## **Pitching Your Issue**

As you frame your arguments to elicit support for your concerns, think about how the elected official adopting the issue will help you both, and how it will impact their district. Make adopting your position appealing to their interests. Try to mix a brief personal story in with your facts and figures.

## **Best Practices**

Be punctual. Plan on meeting for no more than fifteen minutes; however, be willing to stay longer if the official is receptive. Know the official's views and priorities before your meeting, this will help you frame the most convincing argument. Information on the elected official's positions can be obtained through a visit to his or her website, searching the internet, or reading articles about him or her in the local paper. On issues where you cannot come to a mutually agreeable conclusion, always maintain basic courtesy. Be factual and honest. Summarize your three most important points at the beginning and end of the meeting. Never argue motivations, only the merits of the issues.

## **Things to Avoid**

Do not make commitments you cannot keep. Do not tell the official or their staff that you want to "make them aware of" an issue. Once they find you are not asking for anything specific, their attention may drift.

## **Supporting Materials**

Materials supporting your issue should be no more than five pages in length. Your first paragraph should clearly state what you are concerned about and what can be done.

## **After the Meeting**

Send a thank you note to everyone with whom you met. Promptly send any material you promised and act on any commitments you made. Stay in touch and ask what action has been taken related to your issue.



# Recognizing the Accomplishments of Muslim Citizens Resolution

## [SAMPLE RESOLUTION]

Resolution Title: To declare the sense of the legislature of [State]'s recognition of the contributions of Muslims to [State] and nationwide.

**WHEREAS**, the right to freedom of religious practice is a cherished American value and a foundational principle in our nation's laws and ethics, and

**WHEREAS**, the state of [State] has a proud history of supporting individual religious freedoms and is strengthened by the diverse religious, political and cultural traditions of its residents, including Americans who practice Islam, and

**WHEREAS**, there are millions of American Muslims, immigrant and native-born, of diverse backgrounds and beliefs, and

**WHEREAS**, up to 15 percent of African slaves brought to the Americas and what would later become the United States were Muslim and their contributions to the founding of our nation were innumerable, and

**WHEREAS**, 10 percent of American physicians are Muslim and help heal hundreds of thousands of Americans each year, and

**WHEREAS**, Muslims have long served in the nation's armed forces and fought in all major United States wars, spanning from the American Revolutionary War to modern conflicts today, with some Muslims making the ultimate sacrifice in combat, and

**WHEREAS**, our state benefits from a number of Muslims whose faith motivates them to provide food to the hungry, shelter to the needy, inexpensive or free health services, and other humanitarian services,

**WHEREAS**, this Muslim community is recognized as having made innumerable contributions to the cultural and economic fabric and well-being of American society, therefore

**BE IT RESOLVED**, [by the STATE House or Senate], that the state of [STATE]:

(1) Recognizes that the American Muslim community in the United States and [STATE] has made countless positive contributions to our society, and

(2) Confirms its dedication to the rights and dignity of citizens of all faiths, beliefs, and cultures, and

(3) Continues to promote religious and ethnic diversity and tolerance, and

(4) Declares that the civil rights of all United States citizens, including American Muslims, should be protected and preserved.

# Fact Sheet: In Support of Resolution Recognizing the Contributions of Our State's Muslim Citizens

## Objective

In response to heightened Islamophobic rhetoric in the 2016 campaign cycle and an unprecedented nationwide increase in criminal and violent acts of bigotry targeting American Muslims and their houses of worship, it is important for our state to reaffirm that its Muslim citizens are welcomed and their civic contributions are recognized.

## Request

Elected representatives in the state House and Senate adopt the proposed resolution declaring the sense of the legislature's recognition of the contributions of Muslims in our state and nationwide.

## Reasons to support

- In 2015, more than 70 acts of damage, destruction, vandalism and intimidation against Muslim houses of worship were recorded, a record high according to the Council on American-Islamic Relations.<sup>1</sup>
- Many attribute this spike in hate crimes against Muslim at least in part to anti-Muslim rhetoric by presidential candidates like Donald Trump, who called for a complete ban on Muslims entering America, and Dr. Ben Carson, who claimed a Muslim should never be allowed to be president.
- America has a proud history of supporting individual religious freedoms and is strengthened by the diverse religious, political and cultural traditions of its residents including Americans who practice Islam.
- There are millions of American Muslims in the United States,<sup>2,3</sup> a community made up of many diverse beliefs and backgrounds, both immigrant and native-born.
- While often not recognized, up to 15 percent of African slaves brought to the Americas and what would later become the United States were Muslim and their contributions to the founding of our nation were innumerable<sup>4</sup>
- Ten percent of American physicians are Muslim and help heal hundreds of thousands of Americans each year.<sup>5</sup>
- Muslims have long served in the nation's armed forces and fought in all major United States wars, spanning from the American Revolutionary War to modern conflicts today, with some Muslims making the ultimate sacrifice in combat.<sup>6,7,8,9</sup>
- Our state continues to benefit from a number of Muslims whose faith motivates them to provide food to the hungry, shelter to the needy, inexpensive or free health services and other humanitarian services.

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1 Council on American Islamic Relations, "CAIR Report: Number of Incidents Targeting U.S. Mosque in 2015 Highest Ever Recorded," December 17, 2015, See: <http://www.cair.com/press-center/press-releases/13313-mosques-targeted.html>

2 Pew Research Center, "A new estimate of the U.S. Muslim population," January 6, 2016, See: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/01/06/a-new-estimate-of-the-u-s-muslim-population/>

3 US Mosque Survey 2011, a part of the Faith Communities Today (FACT) project of the Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnership, See: <http://faithcommunitiestoday.org/2011-mosque-report-ihsan-bagby>

4 African Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories and Spiritual Struggles. By Allan D. Austin. New York: Routledge, 1997, See: [http://www.jstor.org/stable/1465864?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1465864?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

5 The Bridge Initiative, "American Muslims: Fears v. Facts," August 28, 2015, See: <http://bridge.georgetown.edu/infographic/american-muslims-fears-v-facts/>

6 Craig Considine, Huffington Post, "Honoring Muslim American Veterans on Memorial Day" May 26, 2013, See: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/craig-considine/lets-honor-muslim-america\\_b\\_3339838.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/craig-considine/lets-honor-muslim-america_b_3339838.html)

7 Craig Considine, Huffington Post, "Saluting Muslim American Patriots" April 10, 2015, See: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/craig-considine/saluting-muslim-american-patriots\\_b\\_7039866.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/craig-considine/saluting-muslim-american-patriots_b_7039866.html)

8 Ray Hanania, Al Jazeera, "American Arabs reflect on US military service" November 11, 2015, See: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2015/11/american-arabs-reflect-military-service-15111120809075.html>

9 Shahed Amanullah, Patheos, "Muslims in the military: Crescents among the crosses at Arlington Cemetery," May 30, 2005, See: [http://www.patheos.com/blogs/altmuslim/2005/05/crescents\\_among\\_the\\_crosses\\_at\\_arlington\\_cemetery/](http://www.patheos.com/blogs/altmuslim/2005/05/crescents_among_the_crosses_at_arlington_cemetery/)

# Faith in Our State and Laws Resolution

[SAMPLE RESOLUTION]

## Resolution Title: Faith in Our State and Laws Resolution

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Constitution is the supreme law of our nation, and this body has full confidence in its ability to endure all tests, and

**WHEREAS**, many immigrants came to our nation to escape government-sanctioned persecution of their faith, and

**WHEREAS**, this body believes that any law which is designed to restrict the liberty of one faith tradition erodes the founding principle of religious liberty and that it is, as James Madison wrote in 1785, proper to “take alarm” at any such “experiment on our liberties,” and

**WHEREAS**, our state has a history of embracing individuals’ right to practice the faith of their choice within the law and free of government interference, and

**WHEREAS**, a multiplicity of religious beliefs, traditions and heritages bring strength to our state, and

**WHEREAS**, our state’s schools promote literacy of these religious beliefs, traditions and heritages to empower future American leaders to be aware of different viewpoints and better understand the world around them, and

**WHEREAS**, this body finds abhorrent all forms of discrimination, including those forms of discrimination targeting religion or belief, and

**WHEREAS**, this body believes that it is not the role of the legislature of [STATE] to disparage or marginalize any religious tradition, and

**WHEREAS**, this body reaffirms the inalienable right of every citizen to live without fear and intimidation, and to practice their freedom of faith without state interference,

**WHEREAS**, our state benefits from a number of individuals and institutions whose faith motivates them to provide food to the hungry, shelter to the needy, inexpensive or free health services, and other humanitarian services, and

**WHEREAS**, religious leaders who facilitate conflict resolution often achieve judicially-sanctioned results that ease the burdens on our courts, and

**BE IT RESOLVED**, [by the STATE House or Senate], that [STATE] welcomes all religious beliefs, traditions and heritages, and

**RESOLVED** that this body has full confidence in the U.S. Constitution and the laws of the state of [STATE] and does not entertain any concern that any foreign or religious law offers a threat to the law of the land.

# Fact Sheet: In Support of Faith in Our State and Laws Resolution

## Objective

In response to the ongoing nationwide campaign for states to adopt “anti-Sharia,” “anti-foreign law,” and “anti-Islamic indoctrination” legislation intended to disenfranchise Muslims citizens and demonize Islam, it is important for our state to push back against biased trend by reaffirming its history of embracing individuals’ right to practice the faith of their choice within the law and free of government interference.

## Request

Elected representatives in the state House and Senate should adopt the proposed resolution declaring the sense of the legislature that “it finds abhorrent all forms of discrimination, including those forms of discrimination targeting religion or belief, reaffirms the inalienable right of every citizen to live without fear and intimidation, and to practice their freedom of faith without state interference.” Doing so would reemphasize the state’s support for Muslims and other minority faith communities and send a clear message that we reject the above mentioned state legislative campaign of ratifying anti-Muslim fear mongering.

## Issue Background

- Bucking this anti-Islam legislating trend, lawmakers in Washington state passed the “Faith in Our State and Laws” resolution in 2013. The resolution states, “this body believes that it is not the role of the legislature of Washington State to disparage or marginalize any religious tradition. Senators then resolved, “this body has full confidence in the U.S. Constitution and the laws of the state of Washington and does not entertain any concern that any foreign or religious law offers a threat to the law of the land.”
- For the past five years, Anti-Muslim activists and organizations have methodically introduced legislation that would ban state courts from considering or using either “international law” or “Sharia” in the attempt to suggest that American Muslims are a foreign group who seek to undermine American law and ultimately replace it with Sharia, the religious principles of Islam.
- Most troublingly, elected officials in 10 states have enacted legislation designed to vilify or otherwise target Islam. In at least two states, the way school textbooks are selected was changed because some activists feel that introductory religious courses that teach children Islam’s five pillars are indoctrination and proselytization. The notion that legislators and governors in 20 percent of the nation are willing to vilify Islam through legislation is chilling.
- The source for such foreign law bans is American Laws for American Courts (ALAC). The template is authored by Islamophobe David Yerushalmi. While such a broad bans have legal implications far beyond its intended target, the debates and conversations around ALAC-inspired bills leave little doubt that the movement is motivated by religious bias. Since 2011, more than 100 of these anti-Islam bills have been introduced in more than 30 states and the U.S. Congress.
- However, supporters of these laws fail to acknowledge that American courts are already required to adhere to American law. Anti-foreign law the legislation infringes on the constitutionally-protected right to choose Islamic marriage contracts, implement Islamic wills or to be buried according to one's religious beliefs. These laws could negatively impact the validation of international adoptions and foreign marriages.
- Moreover, these laws may bar any state court from considering of Catholic Canon law and Jewish Halacha law, which are also considered by many courts to be a type of foreign law.

## History of Countering Anti-Islam Legislation

Pushing back against anti-Islam, anti-Muslim legislation is absolutely necessary because Islamophobic activists and organizations have methodically set out to introduce legislation that would ban state courts from considering or using either “international law” or “Sharia” in an attempt to suggest that American Muslims are a foreign group that seeks to undermine American law and ultimately replace it with Sharia, the religious principles of Islam.

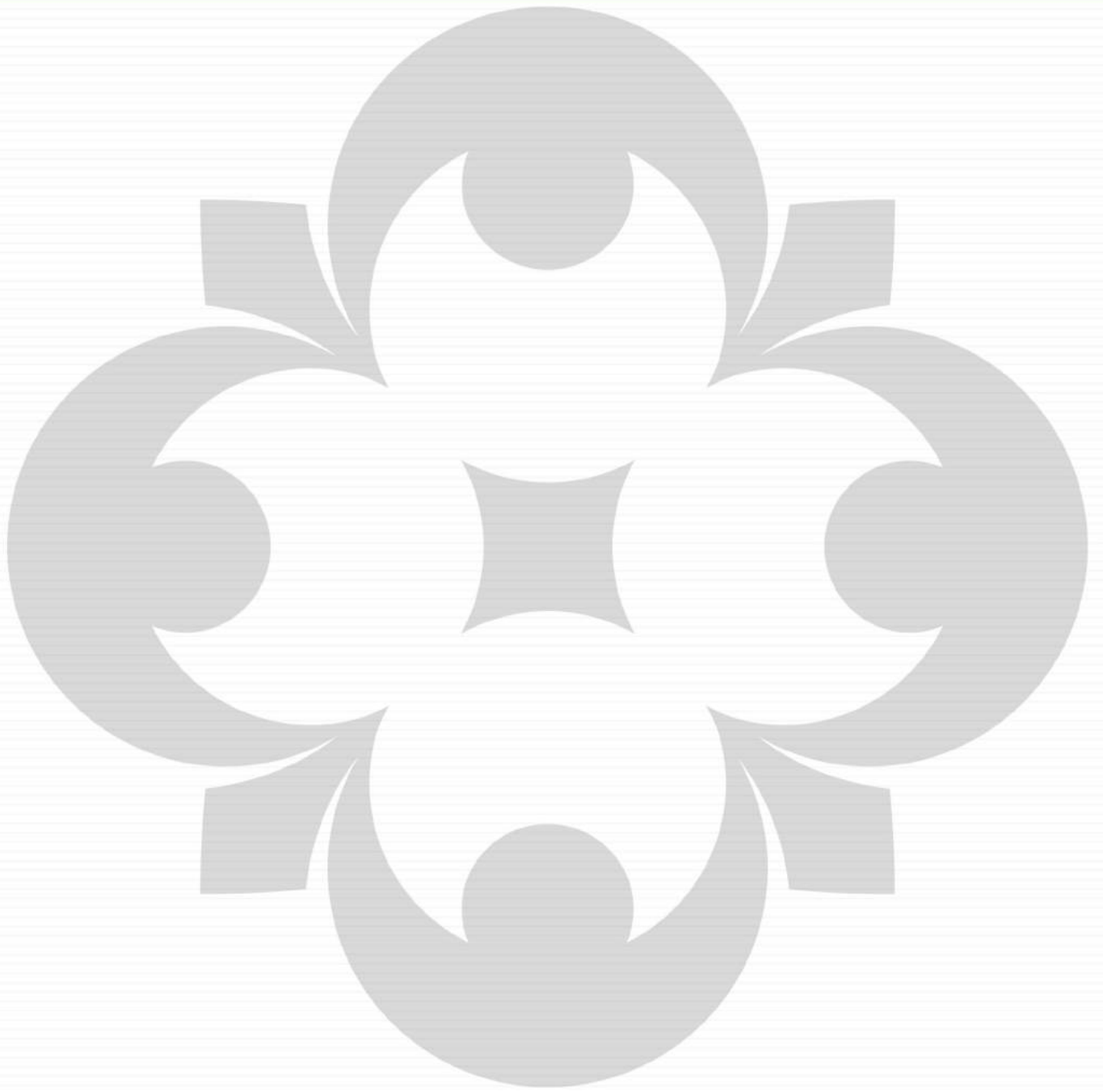
Most troublingly, elected officials in 10 states have enacted legislation designed to vilify or otherwise target Islam. In at least two states, the way school textbooks are selected was changed because some activists believe that introductory religious courses that teach children Islam’s five pillars are indoctrination and proselytization. The notion that legislators and governors in 20 percent of the nation are willing to vilify Islam through legislation is chilling.

Following CAIR’s initial release of its 2012 toolkit, lawmakers in Washington pushed back against this anti-Islam legislating trend by adopting the “Faith in Our State and Laws” of 2013. The resolution supported by CAIR-Washington states, “this body believes that it is not the role of the legislature of Washington State to disparage or marginalize any religious tradition. Senators then resolved, “this body has full confidence in the U.S. Constitution and the laws of the state of Washington and does not entertain any concern that any foreign or religious law offers a threat to the law of the land.”

Similarly, in 2014 the Washington, D.C., City Council adopted a resolution “supporting religious tolerance toward people of all faiths in the District of Columbia” and rejecting anti-Muslim bigotry. The resolution, was supported by CAIR and Jewish Voice for Peace - DC Metro Chapter, and introduced after extremist blogger Pamela Geller’s hate group American Freedom Defense Initiative (AFDI) placed an Islamophobic advertisement on buses in Washington, D.C., falsely claiming that the Quran, Islam’s revealed text, encourages Muslims to hate Jews.

Independently drafted by CAIR, parts of the sample resolutions are modeled on language used in Congressional H.Res. 569 - Condemning violence, bigotry, and hateful rhetoric towards Muslims in the United States, and D.C. City Council resolution 20-579.





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## VISION AND MISSION

CAIR's vision is to be a leading advocate for justice and mutual understanding.

CAIR's mission is to enhance understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

**2016**