



American Muslims in the 2016 Election and Beyond: *Principles and Strategies for Greater Political Engagement*



In the midst of a polarized and heated election season in 2016 in which Muslims are frequent subjects of national debate, the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) set out to discover what American Muslims wanted for themselves.

Contents

Authors

Tasneem Siddiqui, Primary Investigator –
PhD in American Studies and Ethnicity
from the University of Southern California
(USC)

Laila Alawa, Secondary Investigator –
CEO of Coming of Faith

Youssef Chouhoud, Senior Research
Assistant – doctoral candidate in the
Political Science and International
Relations program at the University of
Southern California (USC)

Dalia Mogahed – ISPU Director of
Research

Research Team

Sarrah Buageila – ISPU Project Manager

Stephen McGrath – ISPU Senior
Communications Manager

Advisory Team

Rahfin Farouk

Amaney Jamal, PhD

Muqtedar Khan, PhD

Rashida Tliab

For more information about the study,
please visit:

<http://www.ispu.org/ame2016>

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Shahzad Mian and Uzma Ahmad
Haanei Shwehdi and Ilaaf Darrat

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	8
Methodology	9
Research Findings	10
Why Should American Muslim Communities Engage in Civic and Political Actions?	10
What Are the Benefits to Long-Term Political Participation and Civic Engagement for American Muslims?	10
Why: Narrative & Representation	11
Why: Accountability & Responsibility	11
What Are the Main Policy Priorities for American Muslim Communities?	12
The Challenge of Forming an American Muslim Platform	12
Islamophobia as a Common Concern	13
Diversity in Priorities a Challenge and an Opportunity	14
Guiding Principles	14
Diversity	14
Local and Global	15
Priorities Not Partisanship	15
Striving for the Common Good	16
What Are the American Muslim Community's Policy Priorities?	16
Recommendations	18
What Do American Muslim Communities Need to Do in the Short and Long Terms to Increase Political Participation?	18
Short-Term Tactics	18
Long-Term Strategies	20
Getting Out the American Muslim Vote	23
Conclusion	25
AME 2016 Project Team and Stakeholders	26
Bibliography	31

Executive Summary

In the midst of a polarized and heated election season in 2016 in which Muslims are frequent subjects of national debate, the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) set out to discover what American Muslims wanted for themselves. ISPU researchers sought to answer three key questions:

1. **Why:** What is the case for American Muslim civic and political engagement?
2. **What:** What are the main policy priorities for American Muslim communities?
3. **How:** What do American Muslim communities need to do in the short term and the long term to increase political participation?

Methodology

This report is based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative research techniques. ISPU researchers based their analysis and recommendations on the following:

- A literature review of “Get Out The Vote” best practices
- In-depth interviews with more than 30 civic leaders
- A 2016 ISPU nationally representative poll of American Muslims
- Extensive additional qualitative feedback from our advisors, Muslim community leaders and community members

Research Findings

The following summarizes ISPU researchers’ findings on *why* Muslims should become civically engaged, *what* their policy priorities are, and *how* leaders in this community can increase Muslim civic engagement.

Why: What is the case for American Muslim civic and political engagement?

Eligible Muslim citizens are less likely to be registered to vote than Jews, Catholics, and Protestants (60 percent vs. at least 85 percent) (ISPU 2016). ISPU researchers set out to uncover the case for Muslim civic engagement.

Narrative and Representation:

- **Representation:** If Muslims want their elected officials to consider their priorities, they need to at minimum go to the polls. As one stakeholder put it, “Politicians know who votes and who doesn’t. If you’re a voting community, they’ll come to you. If you’re not a voting community they’ll ignore you.”
- **Ending Apathy:** If Muslims don’t like the available political options, this should push people to engage more to make a change. “If you don’t like the

choices, well, the question is, what are you doing to change [them]? Are you aggregating people to push for something you want? ... Yelling about something alone is not going to move anything up the prioritization ladder.”

- **Optics:** At a time when many openly deny that Muslims can be fully American, there is no better way to disrupt this narrative than by displaying our democratic principles and political power.

Accountability and Responsibility:

- **Ethical Responsibility:** Given the numerous challenges facing the nation, from the criminal justice system, education, the economy, and much more, Muslims have a moral obligation to contribute to solutions and therefore must have a voice in their political system. One interviewee reinterpreted the prophetic statement “you are all shepherds and are all responsible for your flock” to address the larger moral and ethical responsibility Muslims have within their respective societies. In line with principles of a democratic society, some stakeholders articulated the fundamental principles in Islam of promoting the public good and to speak out against injustices.

- **Practical Realities:** Elected officials affect citizens' everyday lives, from their sidewalks and schools to their civil rights and health policy. These elected officials must be called to craft responsible legislation that represents the interests of their constituents, which include Muslims, and this will happen only if Muslims participate in the political system. American Muslims must therefore view voting as not only as a civic duty, but a matter of self interest.

What: What are the main policy priorities for American Muslim communities?

The challenge of forming an American Muslim Platform

Muslims are the only major American faith community with no majority race, and span the socioeconomic and ideological spectra (Gallup 2009, ISPU 2016) and the educational spectrum. Given this diversity, the goal of defining the interests and policy priorities of American Muslims might seem impossible. The challenges facing Muslims in the next 10 to 20 years are to find ways to leverage this diversity as a strength. Despite this diversity, ISPU uncovered a core set of guiding principles and policy priorities.

Guiding Principles

Our research suggests leaders would do well to consider the following guiding principles when negotiating Muslim political engagement.

Policy Priorities

Islamophobia as common concern

Every stakeholder, regardless of political affiliation or inclination, agreed that Islamophobia and civil liberties (the protection of constitutional rights) is a main policy concern. For one stakeholder, it made sense to align Islamophobia with the struggle for freedom and justice of historically marginalized communities: “Yes, there is Islamophobia, but...this is not only a Muslim issue. This is inherent to the discrimination and racism that permeates American civic and political life. So it extends back to this legacy of slavery, the legacy of imperialism.”

What clearly emerged from interviews with stakeholders is that there is no way to predict the policy priorities of American Muslims, and as one stakeholder noted, “...outside the issues of discrimination and Islamophobia there aren't, like, one or two big issues that unite all Muslims.”

“...outside the issues of discrimination and Islamophobia there aren't, like, one or two big issues that unite all Muslims.”

Guiding Principles For Muslim Political Engagement



Diversity: American Muslims need to take into account the vast diversity of their communities and use that as a strength, rather than a liability. By recognizing and embracing this diversity, as opposed to treating it as divisive, Muslims in America can act from a place of authority bringing an invaluable asset to the national dialogue.



Local and Global: By thinking and acting both locally—and globally—American Muslim communities stand a greater chance at creating positive social change. Part of this process involves creating a political culture with a distinctly internationalist perspective, in that American Muslim communities uphold a vision of a just world while being actively involved in responding to the local political, economic, and social conditions each person or community experiences.



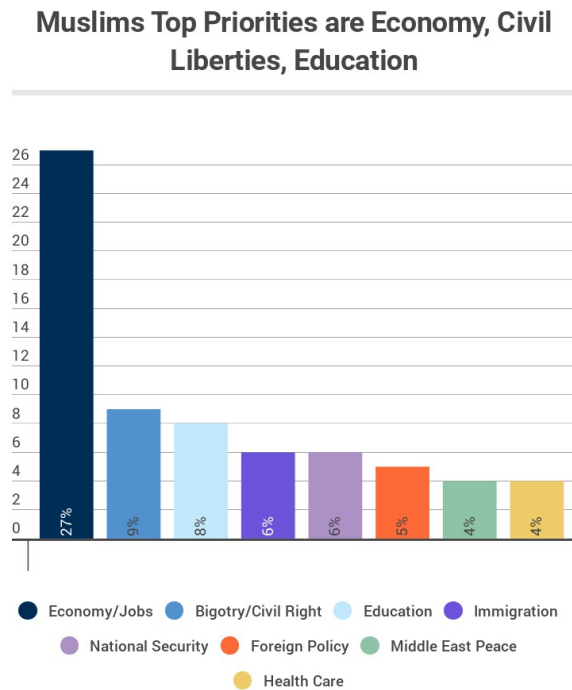
Priorities not Partisanship: Several stakeholders argued for the need to stick to principles and priorities, not political parties, because it will ensure long-term strategic power for American Muslim communities. One stakeholder explained, “We should not act like an ethnic bloc, or an affinity bloc. We should act like a values-based bloc.”



Striving for the Common Good: Striving for the common good and upholding the core values of Islam was a central concern for many stakeholders interviewed. It is incumbent in Islam to redress issues affecting people living the most precarious lives while activating the Islamic ethic of social justice and equity, and upholding this role of stewardship.

The Muslim Public

ISPU's 2016 poll shows American Muslims priorities reflect those of the general public. Of Muslims polled, 20 percent stated the economy was the most important issue for the next president, 9 percent cited racism/discrimination/civil liberties, 8 percent reported education, and 7 percent said jobs. Other important issues American Muslims want the next president to address are immigration (6 percent), foreign policy (5 percent), and peace in the Middle East (4 percent).



Whoever the next president is, what do you think is the most important issue he or she must address? (Open Ended, First response shown)

How: What do American Muslim communities need to do in the short term and the long term to increase political participation?

Short-Term Tactics

Mobilize at the Mosque

- Hold voter registration drives at the mosque.
- Increase voter registration drive efforts during Ramadan and Eid, when larger swaths of the community are present.

- Target elder members and young members of the community to run the drives, and give everyone a specific role to play.
- Invite local candidates running for office to speak at the mosque.
- Arrange buses to take Muslims and non-Muslims to the polls.
- Look beyond the mosque to other Muslim organizations, especially MSA's (college campus-based Muslim Student Associations), with these same tactics.

Leverage Social and Traditional Media

- Create a video of American Muslim leaders across all regions, spectrums, etc., encouraging people to vote.
- Create hashtags (#americanmuslimvoter) and use them to share positive images of American Muslims voting and participating.
- Hire people nationally who work solely on generating and maintaining a social media presence/buzz encouraging people to vote.
- Look to traditional media outlets as well: "We need to take out advertising on the Muslim network. If you look at Dish Network for example, they are now catering almost to the entire Muslim American population in terms of satellite coverage from other countries, whether it's Al Jazeera or MBC or the Pakistani Networks, the variety of languages and...we can do some advertising and campaigning there."

Educate

- To encourage people to vote they **need to understand how to vote**: "If you get potential voters over the hurdle of their first vote, they're much more likely to vote the next time around. *Sample ballots* could be one way to do that, in that one reason folks don't vote may be that they are afraid they'll mess up."
- They **need to know what and who they are voting for**: *Hold town halls or community forums* around single legislation, with local candidates, and providing educational materials about the issues.
- And they **need to know how the entire system works**: "Create Civics classes focused on both how laws are passed and also which jurisdiction certain issues are under, so people know who to go to when they have an issue."

Become Part of the Process

- **Attend conventions—of both parties:** “[a] type of tangible and immediate benefit that we can actually bank on...is parties seeing Muslim activists. That’s humanization.”
- **Work the polls:** “people [can get] excited about the political process but if they don’t understand the process and how it works and what it means to have people assigned to a poll from the beginning of its opening to its closing, and helping to count the votes, it doesn’t mean much.”
- **Run for office—it empowers the individual and entire community:** “I’ve seen a candidate that if they are Muslim and they are running for public office they were able to naturally mobilize our community more effectively and much better in organizing canvas launches, phone bank and so many other campaign events for the candidate with having a huge turnout and a huge support from our community simply for that reason because the person running is coming from that community.”
- **Identify shared values:** Identify an existing campaign that shares your value system. Even if you don’t fully agree with what they believe, join a council race, school board race, go door to door, make telephone calls, write position papers, or help write speeches, but become a part of existing campaigns. Active involvement in local campaigns and elections builds a network of supporters and future volunteers.
- **Wear out shoe leather:** Wearing out shoe leather addresses the importance of building relationships with the local communities Muslims live in and intend to serve. Canvassing is one of the most active forms of campaigning, and it is crucial for American Muslims to do this work. As a community-building activity, canvassing influences voter turnout, builds trust with people from varying backgrounds, and reconnects Americans with their communities.

Long-Term Strategies

For Community Leaders

- **Build from the ground up:** Organize locally, get involved in municipal elections, build coalitions with organizational partners and other communities at the grassroots level. Identify and build relationships with key leaders within every community.

- **Create an American Muslim political culture:** It is imperative to make political activism part of American Muslim culture by learning from historical and contemporary experiences of political mobilization. Understanding the American political system can be deepened by creating inclusive opportunities for civics learning and political education either in preexisting civic organizations and/or religious institutions—primarily by studying the history of black American political engagement.
- **Invest financial resources in political activism:** Invest in organizing and mobilization efforts, political campaigning, developing civic organizations and infrastructure, and strengthening the political capacities of American Muslim communities, such as Muslims running for public offices. Creating American Muslim fundraising apparatuses serves an ancillary purpose of holding elected officials accountable.
- **Build a Council of Councils:** Build an independent movement and infrastructure that leverages the power of American Muslim civic organizations on the national stage while also harnessing multiple voices and perspectives addressing the local and regional distinctiveness of American Muslim communities. To be truly representative of the American Muslim population, it is necessary to create an independent grassroots movement and infrastructure through a democratic process to address local, state, regional, and national issues that concern Muslim communities in America. This infrastructure could be modeled after the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), for example, which was founded in Corpus Christi, Texas, in 1929, and was the first nationwide Mexican-American civil-rights and multi-issue organization. LULAC was organized in response to political disenfranchisement, racial segregation, and racial discrimination.

For Researchers

- **Establish a sophisticated database of potential Muslim voters:** A constantly updated list of voting-age Muslims is an invaluable tool for organizers seeking to activate and leverage this community’s influence.
- **Conduct American Muslim in-house “Get Out The Vote” studies:** A wealth of academic data show what works, on average, to get the general public to vote. A smaller but growing body of literature similarly identifies the various ways minority voters may be persuaded to head to the polls. Although campaigns

and organizers targeting American Muslim voters can draw on lessons from these two bodies of work, it is only through conducting multiple studies focused on this population that we can learn the most cost-effective strategies to reach them.”

Getting Out the American Muslim Vote: Best Practices

While extensive research is necessary to understand what get-out-the-vote (GOTV) methods work best for American Muslim communities, we’ve pulled together findings and strategies from our literature review and expert interviews to help prepare for the 2016 election and beyond.

According to the best research, effective GOTV campaigns must be Personal, Persistent, and Paradigm shifting.

- **Personal:** The personal element of these GOTV tactics is key: face-to-face canvassing and volunteer phone banking offer the most reliable tactics. Moreover, source trust plays a crucial role: canvassers and volunteers should be well trained and drawn from the local community of interest.
- **Persistent:** Numerous studies find that, within election cycles, multiple contact leads to greater turnout and, across election cycles, the effects of prior mobilization efforts are maintained.
- **Shift Paradigms:** Get citizens to actually think of themselves as voters—that is, change their cognitive frame.

Which GOTV Tactics Work and Which Do Not?

What Works	What Doesn't
Direct Mailings:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mailings that use “social pressure” (i.e., reminding a registered voter of their voting record or comparing it to their neighbor’s record), thanking recipients for past participation, or urging them to join an “honor roll” of voters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonpartisan reminders to vote (highlighting civic norms). • Partisan mailers or those advocating for a particular issue.
Canvassing and Phone Banks:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live interactions with human beings with GOTV messages delivered in an authentic manner by a volunteer (whether in-person or over the phone). • Follow-up calls with those who, in an initial call, expressed an expectation to vote more than doubles the turnout effect of a single call when conducted by volunteers (not commercial call banks). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prerecorded calls from celebrities, politicians, or local clergy.
Email and Texts:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails and texts sent by individuals who the recipient knows. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automated emails.
Messaging:	
Voting framed as a social norm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arguments such as civic duty, the closeness of the race, or group solidarity.

Introduction

Muslims today occupy a central position in American politics, but more often as subjects of debate than participants. This is due in part to American Muslims making up a small portion of the U.S. population—most statistically sound estimates place the number of Muslims in America at around 3.3 million, about 1 percent of the total population (Pew Research Center 2016). Although this number is projected to double by 2050, will American Muslim political participation follow suit? As it stands, American Muslim political participation lags in proportional terms. Compared with other faith communities in America, Muslims are the least likely to be registered to vote (Gallup 2009, ISPU 2016). Yet Muslims were the most likely faith community in America to believe in the integrity of the American political process (Gallup 2011). This report explores this disconnect and offers recommendations for increasing American Muslim political engagement.

How do Muslim community leaders and their allies help increase civic and political engagement by American Muslims?¹ The end product of this examination is equal parts descriptive and prescriptive. The study begins

with an overview of the reasons Muslims should engage politically and the key policies and principles stirring or provoking American Muslims. We follow this with a list of short- and long-term recommendations elaborated through case studies of successful American Muslim mobilization at the local, state, and national levels. Overall, this study serves as a guide for individuals and groups seeking to empower Muslims in America through the democratic process.

American Muslims and Elections 2016 focuses on three critical research questions, which will be further developed and answered throughout this brief:

1. Why should American Muslims engage in civic and political action?
2. What are the main policy priorities for American Muslim communities?
3. What do American Muslim communities need to do in the short and long terms to increase political participation?

¹ Civic engagement has been defined as the individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern. It is the right of the people to define the public good, determine the policies by which they will seek the good, and transform or replace institutions that do not serve that good. See Ekman and Amnå (2012).

Methodology

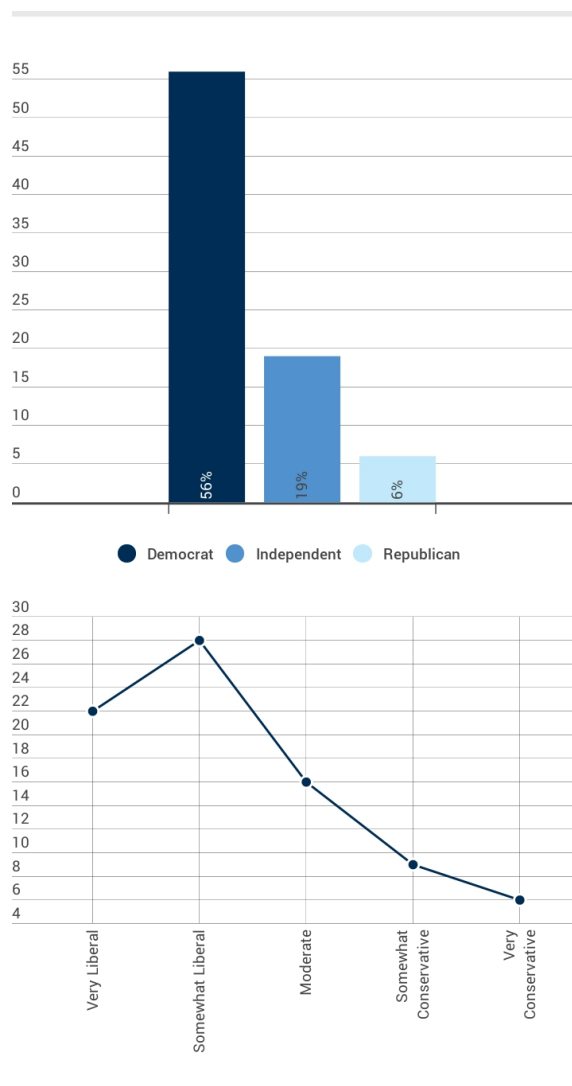
Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 33 stakeholders from a variety of ethnic, political, and social backgrounds across the United States, mining the combined wisdom of generations of experience and scholarship in civic engagement. Each hour-long interview was transcribed and analyzed. The stakeholder group consisted of academicians, politicians, analysts,

grassroots community activists, national leaders, and imams from across the country. ISPU researchers interviewed 11 women and 22 men. Three were self-identified Republicans, representing 6 percent of our respondents, a measure of the 15 percent of Muslims who identify or lean Republican in the United States (ISPU 2016). The remaining respondents were either Democrats or independents.

By conducting qualitative interviews, ISPU researchers are able to articulate an emerging American Muslim political narrative, offer a nuanced description of American Muslim policy priorities, and extract key learnings from success stories for reapplication. This primary research is complemented by studies of historically marginalized communities within the literature review. ISPU also conducted a nationwide representative poll of American Muslims that further informed the qualitative analysis.

Although our respondents were a diverse group, they did not serve as a proxy for American Muslim communities. Instead, these in-depth interviews of community stakeholders provide readers with insights and valuable recommendations from the very people who work with American Muslim community members.

Stakeholder Political Leanings



Research Findings

Why Should American Muslim Communities Engage in Civic and Political Actions?

On a systemic level, democratic theorists affirm the significance of a citizenry's political participation for a well-functioning democracy (Pateman 1970, Dahl 1989). First, from the perspective of the individual citizen, voting is by and large considered intrinsically important—to the point at which majorities in countries where it is not compulsory nonetheless regard voting as not just a right, but a duty (Blais 2000). In ISPU's recent poll (2016), 27 percent of Muslims say civic duty is one of the main reasons to vote. A 2011 Gallup poll found Muslims outpace all other religious groups in America when it comes to confidence in the electoral process. Paradoxically, Muslim voter registration significantly trailed that of the broader American public in recent elections (Pew Research Group 2007, 2011; Gallup 2009; ISPU 2016). Given this gap between the normative views and empirical reality of American Muslims, we probed our stakeholders to think beyond ideals and consider practical rationales that may move reluctant voters.

Second, the collective benefit of voting is compounded with each electoral cycle. When groups vote consistently and noticeably, elected officials take note—and the converse similarly holds, a stakeholder surmised: “Politicians know who votes and who doesn't. If you're a voting community, they'll come to you. If you're not a voting community they'll ignore you.” Beyond having a greater likelihood of being courted, voters' preferences are also better represented in terms of policy than those of nonvoters (Griffin and Newman 2005)—a point that, in our current political context, should increasingly motivate American Muslim voters.

“Politicians know who votes and who doesn't. If you're a voting community, they'll come to you. If you're not a voting community they'll ignore you.”

Third, the claim one is indifferent to the outcome of a vote likely would not withstand some thoughtful deliberation. It is difficult to imagine a voter would not have a set of preferences that broadly align with one candidate or policy over another. Even if all options are highly unsatisfactory, the solution must move away from apathy, framed by one stakeholder:

“If you don't like the choices, well, the question is, what are you doing to change [them]? Are you aggregating people to push for something you want? ... Yelling about something alone is not going to move anything up the prioritization ladder.”

Finally, a consideration particular to American Muslims in this current sociopolitical moment is optics. At a time when many openly deny Muslims can be fully American, there is no better way to disrupt this narrative than by displaying our democratic principles and political power. Supplanting Islamophobic and discriminatory stock images with groups of Muslims queuing up to cast their ballot could go a long way toward shifting the political conversation regarding Muslims in America.

What Are the Benefits to Long-Term Political Participation and Civic Engagement for American Muslims?

Muslims have the youngest median age (23 in 2010) of all major religious groups in the United States (Hackett and Lipka 2015). Qualitative and quantitative social science research found youth political participation in America tends to focus on pathways to participation, the role of gender and race, and the ways young people use information and communications technologies to participate in multiple aspects of the political process (Fisher 2012). These and other studies (Pew Research Center 2012) concluded that volunteerism within civic groups, involvement in activism or social movements, and the social networks created while doing this civic work coupled with the community identity it generates, promotes long-term political participation for youth and young adults.

Stated more clearly, youth engagement is related to long-term political involvement. The earlier young people become politically involved the more likely they are to stay active. Voters coming of age in this current election cycle have a number of factors that indicate they should be more motivated to vote: most notably, group consciousness positively predicts voting, as does the salience and relevance of policy issues, along with strong affect toward the candidates. The current sociopolitical context has the possibility of activating Muslim voters not just for the current cycle, but for many cycles to come.

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How then can we develop the understanding and capacity that voting matters for American Muslim communities? Ultimately, it hinges on four salient concepts that emerged through our stakeholder interviews: narrative, representation, accountability, and responsibility. Through those concepts, ISPU researchers were able to address both internal conversations in American Muslim communities and how those conversations subsequently need to be reflected in the broader political and cultural landscape.

Why: Narrative & Representation

According to our stakeholders, if American Muslims do not define their self-interests individually and collectively, Muslims in America leave themselves vulnerable to being defined by others. Through political representation, the activity of making voices, opinions, and perspectives present in the public policymaking processes American Muslim political actors advocate, define, and act in the political arena, to communicate their values, principles, and social experiences. As put by one stakeholder, “one of the best ways to gain access to rights, to get political gain, is through proper engagement and activism.” Active involvement in the political process increases political visibility and influence among politicians and policymakers, and in some instances opens an avenue for greater access to public funding.

When individuals, communities, and social groups are more engaged, local and state officials, representatives, and policymakers are more responsive to their demands. Particularly within the United States, as a stakeholder pointed out, “From a political point of view the more

you’re engaged the more clout and more power you’re able to wield in the system. And oftentimes we live in societies that are multiethnic, multi-religious, and very diverse.” The underlying impetus to create narratives and authorize political representation requires American Muslims to define their own place in the public sphere.

...if American Muslims do not define their self-interests individually and collectively, Muslims in America leave themselves vulnerable to being defined by others.

Why: Accountability & Responsibility

Our stakeholders cited a number of critical challenges facing our nation, including home foreclosures, dispossession, lack of access to clean water, a struggle against police violence and mass incarceration, rising costs of education, climate change, global humanitarian crises, inadequate housing, increased privatization of basic resources, civil liberties, foreign policy, military engagement, and others. Given these myriad challenges, what then is the ethical and moral responsibility of American Muslims to be civically engaged?

A summary and analysis of stakeholder interviews provides insight into the answer to this question, although it should be clearly noted that the following findings are not representative of the priorities of all American Muslim communities nor the position of ISPU. Some stakeholders emphasized a moral and ethical responsibility for American Muslims to vote. One interviewee reinterpreted the prophetic statement “you are all shepherds and are all responsible for your flock” to address the larger moral and ethical responsibility Muslims have within their respective societies. Although the statement specifically commands an adherent of Islam to take responsibility for the well-being of their families, the stakeholder broadened the message to include the communities in which Muslims live. The logic is that one’s responsibility to family extends to the society and communities they inhabit. This interpretation of a popular prophetic statement is not intended to be a scholarly explanation, but it is an example of how some American Muslims make meaning out of civic engagement and political participation.

Stakeholders further underscored that the basic requirements of being a responsible human being demand engagement and participation in social, cultural, economic, and political settings. In line with the principles of a democratic society, some stakeholders articulated the fundamental principles in Islam of prompting the public good and to speak out against injustices. Some stakeholders further stressed this value of promoting justice and equity could heal major social problems America faces today and bring about possibilities for transformational social change. To fully realize this seemingly altruistic value requires an active engagement in the civic and political life of the United States. Adhering to the prophetic tradition, it is a spiritual responsibility to improve and preserve the collective well-being of humanity.

In line with the principles of a democratic society, some stakeholders articulated the fundamental principles in Islam of prompting the public good and to speak out against injustices.

ISPU's 2016 poll on Muslims and civic engagement found 84 percent of Muslims say they are eligible to vote.² It is imperative for American Muslims who can legally vote to do so. Voting is one step in our participatory democracy. For democratic principles to be actualized, citizens need to vote. To quote a stakeholder at length:

"... voting impacts many aspects of our lives. When you are heading to work and you are stopped by the stop light, that is the result of legislation or city ordinance. When you take your children to school and pick them up or they're dropped off, that is a result of legislation. The curriculum is a result of legislation from the school board level, city council level, state level, and federal level. When we talk about health care policies in this country, from state to state, and now nationally, that is the result of legislation. When you're working a job and you decide to take time off or vacation or sick leave or even maternity leave or paternity

leave, that is a result of legislation. So legislation is important because no civilized society can function effectively without order and structure. And the legislation that we create and the legislation created by elected officials helps to move our republic [forward]. We're still one big [experiment in] democracy, but when you have numerous voices, numerous opinions, varying inputs, I think it makes for a greater community and a greater society."

American Muslims must view voting as one step toward co-creating a truly participatory democracy—not only as a civic duty, but a matter of self-interest, collective well-being, and moral responsibility.

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What Are the Main Policy Priorities for American Muslim Communities?

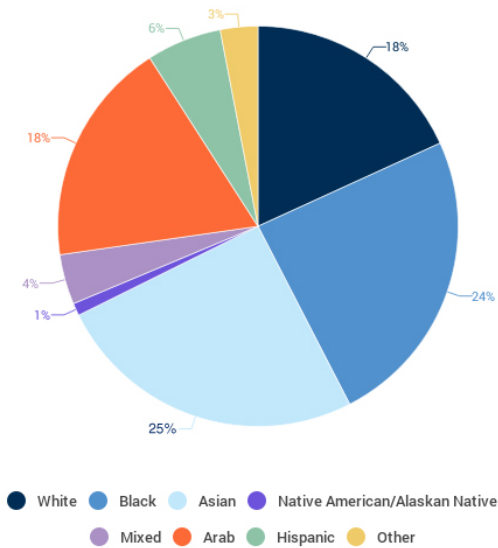
The Challenge of Forming an American Muslim Platform

The goal of defining the interests and policy priorities of American Muslims might seem impossible. As a vibrant microcosm of society, Muslim communities in America crosscut race and ethnicity, they faced different historical circumstances in this country, they emigrated from different countries, they speak various languages, and they follow specific religious sects. Muslims are the only major American faith community with no majority race, and they span the socioeconomic and ideological spectrum (Gallup 2009, ISPU 2016).

American Muslims constitute multiple identities across vast geographies, be it a Black Muslim woman in Chicago

² The survey also found that 60 percent of Muslims are registered to vote vs. 86 percent of Jews who are registered. However, 85 percent of Muslims (and 98 percent of Jews) say they plan to vote in the 2016 Presidential elections, meaning that 25 percent of Muslims still have to register! Fifteen percent of Muslims said they do not plan to vote in the elections.

American Muslims Have No Majority Race



Do you consider yourself white, black or African American, Asian, Arab, Native American, Pacific Islander, mixed race, or some other race?

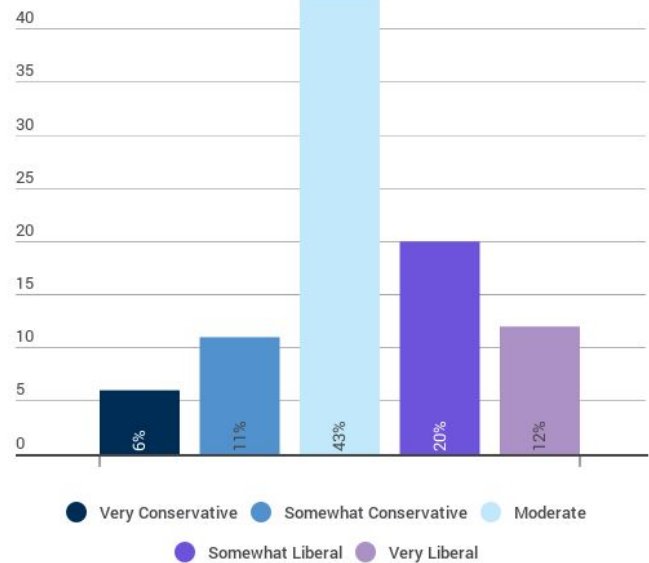
or a Cham Muslim man in Baton Rouge, Muslims in America are at the intersection of several different issues the country faces. Whether it is issues around war; militarization of police forces; or privacy, surveillance, safety, and security, American Muslim identities lie at the crux of these issues. What matters is how American Muslims use this diversity as a political strength.

Islamophobia as a Common Concern

A 2016 ISPU poll of major American faith communities, including Muslims and Jews, found that Muslims were the most likely faith group to report experiencing some degree of religious discrimination (60 percent), with 18 percent reporting they are regularly singled out for their religious identity. Muslim respondents mentioned racism/bigotry/civil liberties as a top priority for the next President (9 percent), second only to the economy (20 percent).

In the current election cycle, Islamophobia and the targeting of American Muslims are wedge issues propelling

American Muslims Span Ideological Spectrum



Generally speaking, would you describe your political views as very conservative, somewhat conservative, moderate, somewhat liberal, or very liberal?

some Republican presidential campaigns. The country is witnessing an electoral strategy “that seeks to monetize Islamophobia into votes at the ballot box and ... to influence elections outcomes moving forward” (Bazian and Leung 2014).

The dehumanizing and subordinating framework of Islamophobia rests on a distinctly racial logic. The logic of Islamophobia collapses a heterogeneous 1.6 billion people into a “single undifferentiated threatening class,” furthermore, “essentializing Muslims and giving them voice only in relation to terrorism and violence” (Bazian and Leung 2014). Muslims are racialized³ as a foreign Other whose system of values, beliefs, and ways of being are incompatible with American democratic ideals and western civilization writ large. A November 2015 nationwide poll found that 56 percent of Americans see Islam as at odds with American values (Public Religion Research Institute 2015).

3 Critical race theorists describe the process of racialization as an ideological, economic, and political project that sorts human beings into categories of difference, assigning value or valuelessness to these categories according to their relations to law, economy, and governance. The term racialization is used to “emphasize the fact that racial categories are social constructions that change in time and space and circumference, and are attributed with status and means.” The processes of racialization is maintained and sustained by violence and domination, for example, through imperialism, colonialism, or police violence. The basic thrust of racialization is dehumanization; ascribing norms, stigmatizing and depreciating some forms of humanity “for the purpose of another’s health, development, safety, profit or pleasure.” See Melamed, 2011, p. 2.

The language and modalities of Islamophobia expose a deep discomfort felt about demographic shifts to U.S. political landscapes and growing economic inequalities. ISPU's report, "Manufacturing Bigotry: A State-by-State Legislative Effort to Pushback Against 2050 by Targeting Muslims and other Minorities" (Khan and Beutel 2014) points to the rapidly changing demographics in the United States as an important reason for a small but influential group of activists and strategists on the right to opt for a divisive strategy. Khan and Beutel found the attempted disenfranchisement of historically marginalized communities through voter identification regulations, state-level immigration laws, same sex marriage bans, right-to-work legislation, antiabortion bills, and anti-Sharia/anti-"foreign laws" bills that were used to politically mobilize a small group of lawmakers. As one stakeholder noted "... when you look at the conservative right, they really are focusing on a targeted, strategic campaign to undermine the growing diversity in this country. ... And there are folks on the right who are really actively working to suppress communities of color [and] American Muslims because we are [a] growing population, and we have money and power, and we really do need to concentrate on the local electorate."

Diversity in Priorities a Challenge and an Opportunity

Issues that have the ability to unite American Muslims of all backgrounds are relatively few and relegated to specific localities. Muslims in America report higher than average college education rates, household incomes above the median, and are the most likely faith group to report small business ownership (Gallup 2009). Whereas this describes the faith community on average, this is not true for all American Muslims. A unified set of social or economic priorities may not bring together all segments of the American Muslim population. When it comes to economics, there are constituencies who would rather lean Republican than Democrat. Other constituencies of American Muslims, who advocate for social and economic justice issues, work on economic equity and mobility and social welfare reform, and lean more toward the Democratic Party. American Muslims do not conclusively have identical interests, and there is no guarantee on a course of action.

Diffuse policy preferences can strengthen the ability of American Muslims to build broad-based coalitions and alliances with other communities. Historically, for marginalized communities, political and social successes and gains were a direct result of coalition building (Miller

1994). As one stakeholder gauged, "We need some American Muslims to be at the forefront of police brutality and violence, whereas we need other American Muslims be at the forefront of Palestine and Kashmir. Let that diversity exist. We embrace that diversity and we

“...We embrace that diversity and we expect that that diversity will be in our best interests in the long run.”

expect that that diversity will be in our best interests in the long run.” With that in mind, it behooves American Muslims to build relationships across social and religious groups on the basis of shared principles, values, or concerns. Given different aspects of the political, economic, cultural, and social forces that animates them, coalition building and issued-based action will vary,

a reality to be embraced. Ultimately, allowing multiple voices, deliberation, and action to build forms of overlapping consensus is the goal; without it, American Muslims squander the unique contributions their diverse communities offer.

Guiding Principles

ISPU stakeholders articulated several guiding principles in the process of thinking through what the policy principles of American Muslims are or should be (see graphic on page 15). Such principles can guide leaders who seek to express community desires and interests in the political sphere.

Diversity

American Muslims need to take into account the vast diversity of their communities and use that as a strength rather than a liability. Social science researchers argue that “the histories and cultures of racial and ethnic groups act as a prism, refracting the interpretation of religious text through differences in group experiences” (Barreto and Karam 2010). Although there is a transcendental quality to being a Muslim and thus a part of a larger global community, Muslims in America experience varying degrees of belonging and alienation given their social experiences (Ahmed et al. 2015).

Cleavages exist along racial/ethnic lines, gender difference, religious schools of thought, immigrant generation, and socioeconomic status that may preclude a cohesive American Muslim identity. By recognizing and embracing this diversity as opposed to treating it

as divisive, Muslims in America can optimize the intersection of local and national issues in which American Muslim communities find themselves positioned, and they can speak and act from a place of authority, thus bringing an invaluable asset to the national dialogue. As one stakeholder explained about the repercussions of dealing with both the communal and national diversity, “We have to remember that most of the country reads at a certain educational level, most of the country may be involved only in what exists in their world and their reality. And so without having the connection to everyday people, the nail technician, the nurse at the local hospital, the grocer at the local Wal-Mart or grocery store, without having those connections to everyday people and working class people, it will be quite difficult for any of us who chooses to represent a public office to be able to articulate their needs, pains, wants, hopes, and desires.”

Local and Global

By thinking and acting both locally and globally, American Muslim communities stand a greater chance of creating positive social change. Part of this process involves creating a political culture with a distinctly internationalist perspective, in that American Muslim communities uphold a vision of a just world while being actively involved in responding to the local political, economic, and social conditions each person or community experiences. In the words of one stakeholder: “Well, I’m both a Martin and Malcolm in my approach. Because

both came to the same position, that is both local/global simultaneously. That we cannot have a local set of priorities without thinking of the global, and we can’t think of the global without thinking of the local.” Stakeholders ardently suggested Muslims in America becoming functional and familiar at the local level, being actively involved in local government while maintaining a keen understanding of how local politics can impact global policies. By engaging in local grassroots organizing and building coalitions on shared principles, American Muslim communities can provide real value to the political process.

Priorities Not Partisanship

Several stakeholders argued for the need to stick to principles and priorities, not political parties, because it will ensure long-term strategic power for American Muslim

“We should not act like an ethnic bloc, or an affinity bloc. We should act like a values-based bloc.”

communities. One stakeholder explained, “We should not act like an ethnic bloc, or an affinity bloc. We should act like a values-based bloc. And those values should be expressed in ways that all Americans can appreciate, not just in terms of values of just self-preservation and self-protection. The self-preservation will come when we serve other people. It’s

Guiding Principles For Muslim Political Engagement



Diversity: American Muslims need to take into account the vast diversity of their communities and use that as a strength, rather than a liability. By recognizing and embracing this diversity, as opposed to treating it as divisive, Muslims in America can act from a place of authority bringing an invaluable asset to the national dialogue.



Local and Global: By thinking and acting both locally—and globally—American Muslim communities stand a greater chance at creating positive social change. Part of this process involves creating a political culture with a distinctly internationalist perspective, in that American Muslim communities uphold a vision of a just world while being actively involved in responding to the local political, economic, and social conditions each person or community experiences.



Priorities not Partisanship: Several stakeholders argued for the need to stick to principles and priorities, not political parties, because it will ensure long-term strategic power for American Muslim communities. One stakeholder explained, “We should not act like an ethnic bloc, or an affinity bloc. We should act like a values-based bloc.”



Striving for the Common Good: Striving for the common good and upholding the core values of Islam was a central concern for many stakeholders interviewed. It is incumbent in Islam to redress issues affecting people living the most precarious lives while activating the Islamic ethic of social justice and equity, and upholding this role of stewardship.

changing rapidly, and we've actually reached a tipping point [at which] I think that the political establishment within Muslim communities is going to follow the grassroots." Rather than stick with parties, one stakeholder stated, "If we're going to say that we're going to be a bloc, then the national bloc, as a principle, is an independent, nonaffiliated group. ... So you earn our commitment rather than taking it for granted."

Although there is an inherent truth to this, research shows that ethnic and religious identity greatly shape the political ideology and partisanship of American Muslims. A 2009 study on the role of religiosity and American Muslim party identification suggests political distancing of American Muslims by both political parties in the United States affected party affiliation (Barreto and Bozonelos 2009). However, American Muslims are more inclined to identify as Democrats based on a sense of group consciousness or a high degree of linked fate, stemming from social experiences of Islamophobia and discrimination. This sense of linked fate—people who say that their lives are intrinsically tied to other members of their social group, especially if that group is structurally disadvantaged—had a substantive effect on partisanship, despite the historical failure of political parties to carve out a space to welcome Islam, Muslims, and American political inclusion (Barreto and Bozonelos 2009). All major Democratic candidates have denounced Islamophobia on multiple occasions, however, during their 2016 primary campaigns.

ISPU's 2016 poll indicates that 15 percent of American Muslims identify as Republicans or are Republican leaning and 73 percent identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party—the highest of any major religious group. The current political posturing of the Republican Party in its anti-Muslim and Islamophobic campaign strategies may push more Muslims toward Democratic party or independent affiliation.

Striving for the Common Good

Striving for the common good and upholding the core values of Islam was a central concern for many stakeholders we interviewed. It is incumbent in Islam to redress issues affecting people living the most precarious lives while activating the Islamic ethic of social justice, equity, and upholding this role of stewardship—striving to improve the quality of all life on the planet, especially for those most vulnerable and structurally oppressed. Framed in this way, a stakeholder noted issues of "[economic mobility and equity] ... are things that sit squarely within, not just the Muslim value set, but the requirement

that Muslims are required to establish justice on the planet, and that within the American context, there's a lot of constitutional provisions and legislative and justice regulations that are not being upheld, that are not being met."

Some stakeholders emphasized an ethic of "Muslim liberation theology," couched firmly in Quranic injunctions; for example, said one interviewee: "I think that the first principle for any Muslim is to engage based on justice, and social justice in general ... and it's not about just us Muslims, even though I am working from a Muslim point of view. [The Quran tells us] don't make the transgressions [and] shortcomings of a people cause you to deviate from justice." The second principle of "Muslim liberation theology" is human dignity and the equity and equality of all human beings. With that in mind, how will all this be concretely implemented?

What Are the American Muslim Community's Policy Priorities?

"I pray the Muslim community never becomes some sort of self-interested ethnic group. I pray the Muslim community will always be the community that has the public interest in mind."

"I would probably say that the Muslims have to begin to think about what their core nonnegotiable priorities are. And then how to negotiate those negotiable interests. Because Muslims are not all going to agree. ... But we have nonnegotiable issues. Muslims have to figure out what those are. ... So that no matter how we differ on the negotiables, we don't differ in a manner that undermines our ability to preserve the core interests that we have as a Muslim community."

Every stakeholder, regardless of political affiliation or inclination, agreed that Islamophobia and civil liberties (the protection of constitutional rights) are main policy concern, issues American Muslim voters need to be extremely vigilant about when any type of legislation is being considered that abrogates constitutional rights (e.g., surveillance, wiretapping, and racial profiling). For one stakeholder, it made sense to align Islamophobia with the struggle for freedom and justice of historically marginalized communities: "Yes, there is Islamophobia, but ... this is not only a Muslim issue. This is inherent to the discrimination and racism that permeates American civic and political life. So it extends back to this legacy of slavery, the legacy of imperialism."

Building on this, a stakeholder stressed, "We need to make sure that when we talk about Muslim American

issues we are not only talking about Arab issues or Southeast Asian issues, but we are talking about Muslims-in-America issues. African Americans are such a large segment of our population. By not [including their narrative/struggle], we are alienating a very important constituency and their coalitions that might enable us to further our cause.” Without an emphasis on coalition building, policy priorities for American Muslim communities may have only a nominal impact. Stakeholders mentioned that American Muslims’ policy priorities were very much in line with those of most Americans around issues of education and health care. What this looks like in regards to legislation is where we see divergences and contestation across party lines.

Stakeholders who hold beliefs more in line with progressive politics comprehensively expressed policy priorities such as immigration, health care, education, police brutality/militarism/mass incarceration, and the environment as some of the main concerns of American Muslims. Moreover, they discussed the need for American Muslim communities to collaborate with communities or groups addressing mutual or related issues. In particular, scores of Muslims are monitored by local police departments and federal law enforcement agencies without probable

cause or reasonable suspicion. To gain any political traction in overturning policies that institutionalize racial profiling of American Muslims, there needs to be a concerted effort to stand in solidarity with Black, Latino, and indigenous communities and fight with them against police brutality, racism, and economic inequalities. One stakeholder articulated the political positioning of American Muslims as such: “I think our priorities as a Muslim community need to be a few folds—we need to be seen as a civil rights community, we need to be seen as a community that works on issues that impact all Americans; so health care, raising the living wage or creating a living wage in this country, issues around education and women’s issues, and obviously issues around what kind of voting rights and other civil rights including criminal justice reforms.”

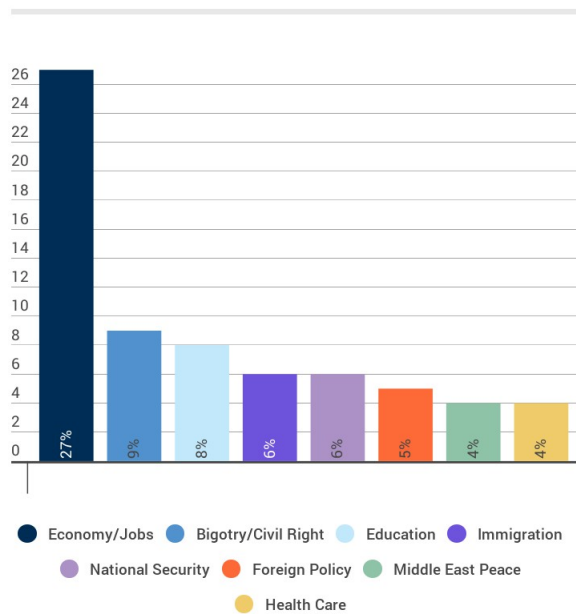
“...outside the issues of discrimination and Islamophobia there aren’t like one or two big issues that unite all Muslims.”

For right-leaning stakeholders we interviewed the policy priorities were divided into several major areas: constitutional rights, foreign policy, humanitarian aid, and domestic issues. To quote one stakeholder: “The first and foremost would be in protecting our constitutional rights. There would be several subcategories, [which] would include free speech, the right to free association, due process issues, surveillance

issues, law enforcement ... access to justice issues. The second area ... would be foreign policy, including [issues such as] where U.S. tax dollars are spent, how they’re spent, the arena of military spending, war, and military engagement, and engagement rules. Then there’s humanitarian aid, [which involves] where aid is deployed, what type of humanitarian policy the United States employs to help alleviate suffering around the globe. The final area is domestic issues ... focusing on health care, education, zoning, the treatment of elderly, etc.”

What clearly emerged from interviews with stakeholders is that there is no way to predict the policy priorities of American Muslims, and as one stakeholder noted, “... outside the issues of discrimination and Islamophobia there aren’t like one or two big issues that unite all Muslims. Do you have a unified economic set of priorities when it comes to Muslim Americans? Not really, because you have the very wealthy segments of the Muslim population who would rather lean Republican

Muslims Top Priorities are Economy, Civil Liberties, Education



Whoever the next president is, what do you think is the most important issue he or she must address? (Open Ended, First response shown)

than Democrat. But then you have a very strong constituency of Muslim Americans on social issues and on redistribution and welfare and things of that sort that are more Democrat leaning.”

ISPU’s 2016 poll shows American Muslims priorities reflect those of the general public. Of Muslims polled,

20 percent stated the economy was the most important issue for the next president, 9 percent cited racism/discrimination/civil liberties, 8 percent reported education, and 7 percent said jobs. Other important issues American Muslims want the next president to address are immigration (6 percent), foreign policy (5 percent), and peace in the Middle East (4 percent).

Recommendations

What Do American Muslim Communities Need to Do in the Short and Long Terms to Increase Political Participation?

Above all else, American Muslim communities share a desire to organize their resources and voices in an effective way to influence decisions that affect their day-to-day lives. Although electoral outcomes influence every aspect of our lives from access to education to health care to economic stability, our interviews with stakeholders suggest American Muslims must increase their participation in the local political process. Rather than focusing on voting as an exclusively national issue by giving primacy to the upcoming 2016 presidential elections, ISPU researchers focused on outlining short-term tactics and long-term strategies that can be further developed and applied by American Muslim community leaders and members.

What short-term tactics can community leaders and community members use to increase American Muslim political engagement? How can American Muslims build the capacity to influence elections and shape American politics? Stakeholders emphasized the importance of finding sustainable ways to engage all segments of American Muslim communities.

“I think it’s important to recognize the difference between organizing and mobilizing that it’s one thing to try to turn people out on election day, it’s another thing to invest in developing a leadership structure, an organization that’s going to be able to sustain political action.”

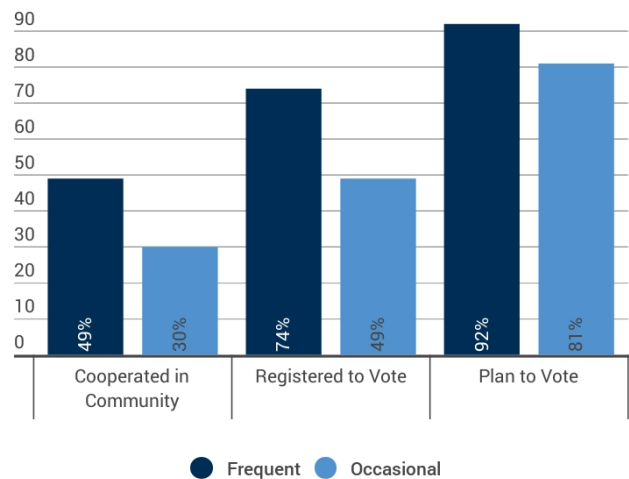
Short-Term Tactics

Mobilize at the mosque: To learn and teach effective collaboration, effective collaborative leadership, and

effective decision-making, community leaders and activists must utilize the power of at least 750,000 people across the country sitting at the mosque on Friday. Mosques are still vital institutions for American Muslim communities with 42 percent of American Muslims saying they attend a mosque one or more times a week (ISPU 2016). Friday khutbas (sermons) aimed at addressing the social and cultural realities of Muslims in America can increase political knowledge and civic and service engagement. Participation in associations, including religious ones, builds the civic skills that expose citizens to the information and attendant norms relevant to voting and makes one more likely to be recruited to vote because they are connected to the networks that mobilize such activity.

From the ISPU 2016 Poll:

Frequent Mosque Attendance Linked to Greater Civic Engagement



In the past 12 months, have you worked with other people from your neighborhood to fix a problem or improve a condition in your community or elsewhere? (% Yes shown); Are you registered to vote at your present address or not? (% Yes shown); Do you plan to vote in the 2016 presidential election? (% Yes shown)

Teach civics: Beyond becoming motivated to vote or become civically engaged, the community needs to understand the process and basic civics. A stakeholder advised: “I think having a class on civics—how laws are not necessarily passed, but what jurisdiction certain issues are under, [so] that everyone knows exactly who to go to when they do have an issue. I think most Americans just don’t know where to go. And they feel disempowered when they do have an issue. You know, voting is just the first step. One thing that I think community organizations should be doing is really actively teaching people about the voting process, especially about laws, regulations and rules pertaining to absentee voting and things like this. What needs to happen is that institutions that have a little bit of wherewithal and are committed to making sure that Muslims vote need to do the legwork.”

Target current institutions toward voter mobilization. If every organization had an intentional commitment, let’s say 10 to 15 percent, of their activities dedicated in some way to voter education, mobilization, or registration, we would see an exponentially greater impact. Mosques can set up voter registration drives; civic organizations or associations can offer sample ballots particularly targeting voters recently enfranchised and hold community teach-ins and town hall meetings on the most relevant issues local communities encounter. Most organizations and associations have a followership that can be tapped to coordinate community-based learning by organizing volunteer opportunities, voter education, and popular education workshops and trainings, specifically engaging young American Muslims. Studies show that youth involvement in civic groups focused on community service, political representation, and grassroots activism positively affects future political participation (Mcfarland and Thomas 2006). When youth are actively engaged civically and receive leadership training and development, the likelihood of creating habitual voting behavior and sustained political engagement increases.

For Individuals

Create social media campaigns: Technological communication enables and promotes different forms of political and civic engagement. Numerous studies have discussed the ways activism and more institutionalized forms of political engagement—including voting—have increased through the use of these technologies. The network effects we see on social media are powerful. Social media works by expanding networks: reach one person and see who they know, and reach those people and see who they know. Civic organizations and political

groups can initiate social media campaigns to expand networks, mobilize civic participation, and influence optics and media representation of American Muslims. An abundance of negative images are associated with American Muslims—Election Day affords Muslim voters the opportunity to go out in droves and create a counter-narrative. Pictures of Muslims queuing at the voting station, hash tags (#americanmuslimvoter), and text-message campaigns are all cost-effective ways to increase awareness and turnout.

Identify shared values: Identify an existing campaign that shares your value system. Even if you don’t fully agree with what they believe, join a council race, school board race, go door to door, make telephone calls, write position papers, or help write speeches, but become a part of existing campaigns. Active involvement in local campaigns and elections builds a network of supporters and future volunteers. Individuals develop an understanding of how local county politics work and understand the importance of becoming, for example, a precinct committee person while learning the political system. Participation builds political interest, political knowledge, political efficacy, and party identification, all robust factors that influence voting behavior and promote a political culture where Muslims think of themselves as informed citizens and voters. The Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) of Chicago provides a great example.

LOCAL ORGANIZING ON SHARED VALUES:

The Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN) joined residents and organizers from across Chicago to mount a campaign to acquire foreclosed and vacant buildings and homes across Chicago’s South Side for a program providing housing for the formerly incarcerated. IMAN leaders and organizers came together with neighborhood leaders standing with imams, priests, and rabbis to create the Multifaith Housing Reclamation Campaign. Residents, leaders, and organizers packed courtrooms and publicly took over some homes to reclaim properties, blocks, and their communities from the “dereliction of banks and government agencies.” After a year of hard work raising resources, IMAN pulled together a unique partnership between the Department of Housing and Economic Development, Al Faisal Without Borders, the Chicago Community Trust, and Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago and began the process of rehabilitating properties and training reentry work crews. Through the

process of building community partners, multifaith campaigns, and city partnerships, residents and organizers working in these spaces produced a different type of understanding of community organizing and politics at the local level. Residents who became involved learned how to organically build political power, alliances, and committees that affected municipal elections and the relationships between communities and politicians. This example shows how communities can mobilize around identifying existing campaigns and highlighting their shared values with other communities of faith, city officials, and local residents.

Wear out shoe leather: Wearing out shoe leather (i.e., visiting neighbors, knocking on doors) addresses the importance of building relationships with the local communities Muslims live in and intend to serve. Canvassing is one of the most active forms of campaigning, and it is crucial for American Muslims to do this work. As a community-building activity, canvassing influences voter turnout, builds trust with people from varying backgrounds, and reconnects Americans with their communities. Canvassers and volunteers must be well trained and drawn from the local community of interest. Importantly, canvassing is a way to organize multiple communities around mutual interests. Congressman Keith Ellison's win provides a perfect example.

When running for the U.S. House of Representatives from Minnesota's 5th district in 2006, Democratic Congressman Keith Ellison needed 10,000 new primary voters to win the primary election. Ellison realized, through experience, that he needed to expand his base and reach people who never voted, and more importantly, get them to vote for him. Because of Congressman Ellison's background as an organizer, he was able to achieve what many primary candidates were unable to do—expand the electorate. With his team, Congressman Ellison wore out shoe leather: he went door-knocking, had people sign pledges promising they were going to vote for him, and he approached Minnesota's sizeable Somali community. In a race where a few hundred votes matter, Ellison got every Somali vote. This was not accomplished through e-mail, Facebook, or television ads, it was through conversations in their masjids and at their restaurants—and as a result, Ellison had 70-year-old Somali grandmothers showing up to vote as first-time voters. Ellison relied on tried and true organizing methods by

holding face-to-face conversations with people in the communities he aimed to represent. Social media and an online presence can enhance campaigns or initiatives, however, they must be paired with a sustained ground presence.

Long-Term Strategies

For Community Leaders

Build from the ground up: Organize locally, get involved in municipal elections, build coalitions with organizational partners and other communities at the grassroots level. Identify and build relationships with key leaders within every community. Initiate training programs or opportunities that empower American Muslim communities and their coalitional partners. Such programs would facilitate building knowledge and understanding of the American political landscape and develop avenues to access greater resources. Such initiatives would begin to alleviate the relative isolation local communities experience in their efforts to mobilize voters.

The strategy of building from the ground up is inspired by and best illustrated by the recent campaign by American Muslims for the recognition of Eid in New York City public schools. Muslims of every racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic background succeeded in organizing each other as far and wide as Staten Island to the Bronx. One crucial reason why this campaign was successful is that the organizers chose an issue that united all segments of the American Muslim communities in New York City. A stakeholder detailed: "Everybody had a story to share about how their child [who] went to public school had to choose between going to school and being with their family and celebrating their faith. So that the issue itself was a uniting factor to bring people together." The campaign functioned with very specific roles for communities to play, "whether that meant that we asked you to bring and mobilize people to stand in front of City Hall, whether we asked you to collect petitions in your community demanding that the Mayor incorporate Muslim school holidays, whether we asked you to go have meetings with your local City Council members so that they can vote in favor of the resolution to incorporate the full school holidays, whether we asked you to create a town hall meeting in your community that represented the voices of that particular community, whether you are African Muslim, whether you are Bosnian, whether you are Arab American or South Asian."

By assigning clear roles to individuals, the campaign found success when encouraging people to lobby or

advance the initiative. The more tangible the task, the more likely people were to carry it out, rather than giving people general instructions or simply leaving them to mobilize. As one stakeholder explained: “So having a goal that unites people across the board, looking around the table and actually asking ourselves who’s missing at the table—are Shias at the table? Are South Asians at the table? Are Afghanis at the table? Are Arabs at the table? Are Black Muslims at the table? It was really important to us and that once we had a very diverse coalition we found that that really helped encourage Muslim communities to organize and mobilize because everybody felt represented. And the question is how we make people feel represented.” With the success of recognizing Eid holidays in New York City public schools, other cities and towns across the United States have followed suit.

Create an American Muslim political culture: It is imperative to make political activism part of American Muslim culture by learning from historical and contemporary experiences of political mobilization. Understanding the American political system can be deepened by creating inclusive opportunities for civics learning and political education either in preexisting civic organizations and/or religious institutions—primarily by studying the history of black American political engagement. A number of our stakeholders discussed the need for American Muslim communities to learn from the black American political experience, practice, and organizing strategies, particularly the Civil Rights movement. Led by black southerners in the 1940s to the 1960s, this transformational social movement organized multiracial, multigenerational, interfaith coalitions across class lines to fight for dignity and human rights, black enfranchisement, and social and economic justice. These rich historical models show how black Americans organized their churches, ministries, organizations, and institutions to fight to abolish racial segregation, inequality, and secure their rights. The struggle for enfranchisement was not an end in itself but part of a systematic process to push forward comprehensive social change. Their numbers were small but their effect was immeasurable. These stories show communities facing related social injustices the possibilities of sustained political action and the impact small organized numbers can make.

Invest financial resources in political activism: Invest in organizing and mobilization efforts, political campaigning, developing civic organizations and infrastructure, and strengthening the political capacities of American Muslim communities, such as Muslims running for public offices. Creating American Muslim fundraising

apparatuses serves an ancillary purpose of holding elected officials accountable. In contentious elections in which elected officials know that if they vote against the interests of American Muslim communities, such as voting in favor of anti-Sharia legislation, American Muslims have now mustered the resources to produce substantive counter-narratives and campaigns, as in the case of former Congressman Allen West of Florida.

Elected in 2010, former Republican Congressman from Florida’s 22nd congressional district, Allen West was the most vocal Islamophobe in Congress. He ostracized American Muslim communities during his two-year term by making inflammatory comments daily, attacking Islam at every opportunity. During Rep. West’s term, civic organizations worked with different political groups to identify individuals interested in running for political office. Patrick Murphy eventually decided to jump into the race and run against Rep. West in 2012.

By deploying a series of tactics that included engagements at mosques, use of home mailers, e-mail marketing, tapping personal contacts, and aggressively canvassing in the former congressman’s community, American Muslim communities in Florida were able to drive up the Muslim vote and unseat incumbent West. The win came, a stakeholder shared, at “a clip of 2,100 votes in that particular congressional district. Allen West lost that election by 1,900 votes, [to] Patrick Murphy. Incidentally, Patrick Murphy is now running for the Senate in the state of Florida, for Marco Rubio’s seat.”

This sustained effort and organization demonstrated the capacity of everyday people to build political power. Some assert that the margin of victory, 2,100 votes, represented the Muslim Arab South Asian community. In addition to building internal political power within the American Muslim community in America, organizers extended their engagement efforts into black American communities in Florida, building cross-community relationships and strategic alliances. This example demonstrates the level of impact American Muslims can have in their immediate congressional district. In a municipal election, the impact could be even more pronounced.

Build a Council of Councils: Build an independent movement and infrastructure that leverages the power of American Muslim civic organizations on the national stage while also harnessing multiple voices and perspectives addressing the local and regional distinctiveness of American Muslim communities. To be truly representative of the American Muslim population, it is necessary to create an independent grassroots movement and infrastructure through a democratic process to address local, state, regional, and national issues that concern Muslim communities in America. The movement and infrastructure serves a dual purpose of developing leadership and civic skills while attending a dynamic and changing political climate. The leadership framework engenders learning and training through participation in organized efforts; people learn as they participate. It creates a pluralistic environment through engaging and working with existing organizations and opens opportunities for capacity building and development. This infrastructure could be modeled after the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), for example, which was founded in Corpus Christi, Texas, in 1929, and was the first nationwide Mexican-American civil-rights and multi-issue organization. LULAC was organized in response to political disenfranchisement, racial segregation, and racial discrimination. A few of the issues the league countered was the lack of political representation, segregation of public schools, housing, and accommodations. LULAC served as a school for leadership development for generations of members directly involved in issues such as abolishing poll taxes at the local level, supporting candidates for municipal and congressional offices, appointments to important federal and state positions, and federal hearings on issues of immigration.

For Researchers

Establish a sophisticated database of potential Muslim voters: Given recent demagoguery, it is perhaps natural for American Muslims to balk at the notion of a “database.” In the right context and with the right intentions, however, a constantly updated list of voting-age Muslims is an invaluable tool for organizers seeking to activate and leverage this community’s influence. Such a directory—ideally populated with multiple modes of contact—would, at least for the foreseeable future, be under the purview of organizations at the local level (variably defined by city, county, or some other relatively tight geographic boundary). Expanding to the regional and national levels may eventually make logistical sense, but moving in the opposite direction—that is, toward a focus on hyperlocal communities—may be the better step at

this still nascent stage in Muslim political engagement. To that end, mosques should make it a point to gather their congregants’ contact information and play the role of mobilizer until such time as more institutions built for that purpose arise.

Conduct American Muslim in-house “Get Out The Vote” studies: A wealth of academic data show what works, on average, to get the general public to vote. A smaller but growing body of literature similarly identifies

Building a movement is very different than marketing a product. Because, in a real way, marketing a product leaves people just the way they were, it’s like you adapt to people’s preferences. Movement building is people actually learning from their engagement, there’s a transformational dimension.

the various ways minority voters may be persuaded to head to the polls. Although campaigns and organizers targeting American Muslim voters can draw on lessons from these two bodies of work, it is only through conducting multiple studies focused on this population that we can learn the most cost-effective strategies to reach them. Certain messages and appeals that have proven effective in other communities of voters may not have the same influence on American Muslims. For instance, appeals to regular nonvoters comparing their voting record with that of their neighbors—a commonly used tactic in get-out-the-vote (GOTV)

campaigns—may elicit anger and fear among American Muslims given the current sociopolitical climate.

Political engagement and strategy is not a foregone conclusion. As one stakeholder put it, “It’s not just, ‘what message will turn on people to X,’ it’s not a marketing operation. It is an organizing operation, and they’re very different. ... Building a movement is very different than marketing a product. Because, in a real way, marketing a product leaves people just the way they were, it’s

like you adapt to people's preferences. Movement building is people actually learning from their engagement, there's a transformational dimension. ... I think one of the real problems that lots of communities run into when they may not have a lot of exercising power in this way is internal fragmentation."

Getting Out the American Muslim Vote

Paradoxically, broad based get-out-the-vote initiatives may actually increase inequality at the voting booth. That is, general voter drives tend to disproportionately motivate those who are members of groups already well represented in the electorate as opposed to members of underrepresented communities (Enos et al. 2014). This makes the need to organize and execute GOTV campaigns geared toward minority groups that much more critical. To that end, the following review highlights some of the key learnings from the research on GOTV interventions. The research is supplemented with recommendations from our stakeholders, those actively engaged in these efforts on the ground.

GOTV Tactics: What Works and What Doesn't Work?

According to the best research, effective GOTV campaigns must be Personal, Persistent, and Paradigm shifting.

- **Personal:** The personal element of these GOTV tactics is key: face-to-face canvassing, and volunteer phone banking offer the most reliable tactics. Moreover, source trust plays a crucial role: canvassers and volunteers should be well trained and drawn from the local community of interest.
- **Persistent:** Numerous studies find that within election cycles, multiple contact increases turnout and across election cycles, the effects of prior mobilization efforts are maintained.
- **Shift Paradigms:** Get citizens to actually think of themselves as voters—that is, change their cognitive frame.

Direct mailings:

- Nonpartisan reminders to vote (highlighting civic norms) have a minimal effect on turnout, whereas partisan mailers or those advocating for a particular issue have no effect.

- What tends to have a stronger mobilizing effect are unconventional mailings that use "social pressure" (i.e., reminding a registered voter of their voting record or comparing it to their neighbor's record), thanking recipients for past participation, or urging them to join an "honor roll" of voters.

Canvassing and Phone Banks:

- Prerecorded calls from celebrities, politicians, or local clergy had nearly zero effect.
- Tactics that involve live interactions with human beings with GOTV messages delivered in an authentic manner by a volunteer (whether in-person or over the phone) tend to elicit the largest mobilizing effect.
- Follow-up calls with those who, in an initial call, expressed an expectation to vote more than doubles the turnout effect of a single call when conducted by volunteers (not commercial call banks). Muslim stakeholders put it this way:
 - "Call people. Some years, depending on the cost, it's personal phone calls, other years it's local calls. It is reminding people the day before and the day of the election to vote. This is another strategy that we see working."
 - "But I have seen to a great effect, active Muslim Americans calling people in the phone book for example on Election Day to vote for one particular candidate or another, and just literally calling their friends. And walking over to a neighbor's houses. To get out the vote. And I have seen it happen to, to great effect."

Email and Texts:

- Emails sent by individuals that the recipient knows can make an impact, whereas automated emails (regardless of the sender) have no effect.
- Text messaging has a surprisingly consistent effect on voter turnout.

Messaging

- Messaging experiments to date have suggested arguments used to encourage voting (civic duty, the closeness of the race, group solidarity) tend to have relatively minor effects, whereas the norms used to frame those arguments (e.g., social pressure, gratitude) have much stronger effects.
- A large-scale direct mail experiment that randomly varied the forcefulness with which the norm of voting was asserted found that with each incremental rise in social pressure, the effect on voter turnout increased.

It is possible, however, that there may be a backlash against this kind of messaging when coupled with a partisan call to vote. Softening the message a bit may guard against this countervailing effect—for example, invite potential voters to review their record for errors.

- Have strategic messaging: as one stakeholder put it, “it depends on the issue, but for the most part it’s messaging that emphasizes the importance of acting, and some statistics that people want to hear about how they’re joining a successful movement, not how they’re aiding a likely unsuccessful movement.”
- ISPU’s 2016 poll found that the top two reasons people gave for voting are: civic duty (27%) and wanting to make a difference (22%). The top two reasons for NOT voting among Muslims who say they will NOT vote are: My vote doesn’t matter/count/won’t make a difference (19%) and I don’t like any of the people running (17%). No one cited a religious prohibition or duty.

BIG TAKEAWAYS:

The more personal the interaction with voters, the more likely it is to convince them to vote when they otherwise might not have. Oftentimes, simply being reached out to is enough to motivate a voter—which is to say, simply feeling that someone cared enough to ask them to vote. The costs of these more personal interactions may be too high for some budgets, and so effective use of impersonal contact (whether mailings or text messages) would be the next best option. Underlying either of these approaches, however, is the need to get a better understanding of where Muslims are and how they may be reached (see database recommendation above).

Mobilize at the Mosque

- Hold voter registration drives at the mosque.
- Increase voter registration drive effort during Ramadan and Eid, when larger swaths of the community are present.
- Target elder members and young members of the community to run the drives, give everyone a specific role to play.
- Invite local candidates who are running to come speak at the mosque.
- Arrange buses to take people to the polls, Muslims and non-Muslims.
- Look beyond the mosque to other Muslim organizations, especially MSA’s (college campus based Muslim Student Associations), with these same tactics.

Leverage Social and Traditional Media

- Create a video of American Muslim leaders across all regions, spectrums, etc., encouraging people to vote.
- Create hashtags (#americanmuslimvoter) and use them to share positive images of American Muslims voting and participating.
- Hire people nationally who work solely on generating and maintaining a social media presence/buzz encouraging people to vote.
- Look to traditional media outlets as well: “We need to take out advertising on the Muslim network. If you look at Dish Network for example, they are now catering almost to the entire Muslim American population in terms of satellite coverage from other countries, whether it’s Al Jazeera or MBC or the Pakistani Networks, the variety of languages and...we can do some advertising and campaigning there.”

Educate

- To get people to vote they **need to understand how to vote**: “If you get potential voters over the hurdle of their first vote, they’re much more likely to vote the next time around. *Sample ballots* could be one way to do that, in that one reason folks don’t vote may be that they are afraid they’ll mess up.”
- They **need to know what and who they are voting for**: *Hold town halls or community forums* around single legislation, with local candidates, and providing educational materials about the issues.
- And they **need to know how the entire system works**: “One thing that I think community organizations should be doing is really actively teaching people about the voting process, especially about laws, regulations and rules pertaining to absentee voting and things like this. What needs to happen is that institutions that have a little bit of wherewithal and are committed to making sure that Muslims vote need to do the legwork.”

Become Part of the Process

- **Attend conventions of both parties**: “[a] type of tangible and immediate benefit that we can actually bank on. That is, parties are seeing Muslim activists, people with beards, or Muslim names or jobs, or whatever, however else it is. They’re seeing brown-skinned people, basically, attending the conventions, cheering on. That’s humanization of the Other, and we’re the other in this case, is the primary tangible benefit that participation can bring

about and, therefore, it's irrelevant who they support. The fact that they're supporting somebody is what's important."

- **Work the polls:** "people [can get] excited about the political process but if they don't understand the process and how it works and what it means to have people assigned to a poll from the beginning of its opening to its closing, and helping to count the votes, it doesn't mean much."

- **Run for office—it empowers the individual and entire community:** "I've seen a candidate that if they are Muslim and they are running for public office they were able to naturally mobilize our community more effectively and much better in organizing canvas launches, phone bank and so many other campaign events for the candidate with having a huge turnout and a huge support from our community simply for that reason because the person running is coming from that community."

Conclusion

Muslims have yet to realize their full political potential through voting, organizing, and coalition building. More and more, however, a new generation of activists and community leaders is engaging the political process as full participants, motivated both by the desire to make a difference and a sense of civic duty. Ironically, Islamophobic rhetoric so common in the 2016 election cycle aimed at marginalizing Muslims may have given a fragmented community a rare common concern around which to mobilize, and a united party platform for which

to cast their ballot. The mosque, a focal point of attacks, emerges as a gathering place for grassroots civic engagement, education, and community service. To realize their full potential, Muslims must build for the short term through education, local participation, and effective get-out-the-vote campaigns. Muslims must plan for the long term by building a sustainable infrastructure for political mobilization, investing in more research on American Muslim voters, and cultivating an American Muslim civic culture.

AME 2016 Project Team

Dalia Mogahed – Director of Research

Dalia Mogahed is the Director of Research at the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, where she leads the organization's pioneering research and thought leadership programs on American Muslims. Mogahed is former Executive Director of the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, where she led the analysis of surveys of Muslim communities worldwide. With John L. Esposito, she coauthored the book *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think*. President Barack Obama appointed Mogahed to the President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships in 2009. She was invited to testify before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations about U.S. engagement with Muslim communities, and she provided significant contributions to the Homeland Security Advisory Council's Countering Violent Extremism Working Group recommendations. She is a frequent expert commentator in global media outlets and international forums. She is also the CEO of Mogahed Consulting.

Sarrah Buageila – Project Manager

Sarrah Buageila is the Project Manager for ISPU's Research Department. Sarrah spent eleven years at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, where she has worked as an interviewer, research assistant, and project manager within the Project Design and Management Group. She primarily worked on the National Survey of Family growth, a study of the National Center for Health Statistics. Sarrah has co-authored papers for the International Field Directors and Technologies Conference and the American Association for Public Opinion Research Conference. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and has completed graduate work toward a Masters of Liberal Arts in American Studies.

Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui – Principal Investigator

Dr. Tasneem Siddiqui is an ISPU Fellow and the Primary Investigator for ISPU's American Muslims Elections Project 2016. She holds a Ph.D. in American Studies and Ethnicity from the University of Southern California (USC). She is trained in American studies, critical American Muslim studies, ethnic studies, Black studies and the African diaspora, political geography, U.S. history, and social anthropology. Her research interests cover the intersections of race, power, and geography to explore how historically marginalized peoples and communities produce systems of knowledge, practice, and social movements. Her current research explores the ways in which racial, ethnic,

social, gender, and religious identities are activated, managed, and manipulated for a broad range of political behaviors in the contexts both of the contemporary political activity of American Muslims and of the historical political activity of Black Americans. Tasneem holds a Master of Arts in American Studies and Ethnicity from USC and earned a Master of Science in Social Anthropology from the London School of Economics and Political Science. She graduated Cum Laude and received a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from the University of California, Irvine. She is engaged in holistic lifestyle practices such as yoga, meditation, nonviolent communication, and a wholesome and pure diet and seeks to create initiatives that use these practices as solutions to liberate and heal our interior landscapes from the psychic realities of racism.

Laila Alawa – Secondary Investigator

Laila Alawa is the CEO and Founder of *Coming of Faith*, a leading media company by diverse millennial women for the world. She is also the host for *The Expose*, a *Coming of Faith* weekly podcast tackling tough topics with snark and wit. She was recently featured in *The New York Times* Women in the World. In 2015, Laila was named an Ariane de Rothschild Fellow. Prior to founding *Coming of Faith*, Laila was a research specialist at Princeton University, studying socio-cognitive processing under the framework of community identity and belonging. Laila has built a loyal following through her writing for sites such as *The Atlantic*, *The Guardian*, *Salon*, and *Mic*.

Youssef Chouhoud – Senior Research Assistant

Youssef Chouhoud is a doctoral candidate in the Political Science and International Relations program at the University of Southern California (USC). He earned a bachelor's degree in History at Lehigh University where, as a President's Scholar, he went on to complete a master's degree in Political Science. As a Provost's Fellow at USC, Youssef's research interests include political attitudes and behavior, survey methodology, and comparative democratization. His current project highlights the contextual bounds of political tolerance, while his dissertation examines how political culture may be transformed during transitions from authoritarian rule. A recent participant in the American Muslim Civic Leadership Institute training program, Youssef remains active in the Muslim community at USC and in the greater Southern California area.

AME Stakeholders

Mustafa Abdullah

Mustafa Abdullah holds a B.A. from Wake Forest University, where he majored in religion and minored in philosophy and Middle East and South Asia studies. He currently is the Lead Organizer for the ACLU of Missouri, where he works to protect the civil liberties of all Americans through advocacy, organizing, and public education. Mr. Abdullah serves as board member of Missouri Immigrant and Refugee Advocates and is a co-founder of Muslims for Ferguson.

Jamiah Adams

Jamiah Adams is a CAP Leadership Fellow and the Director of Digital Media Department at the NAACP, where she runs digital strategy campaigns on criminal justice, civic engagement, health, and voter suppression, including This Is My Vote, a civic engagement site that encourages people to register to vote, disseminates voter information, and details the state-by-state battle against voter suppression. Ms.

Adams uses her leadership knowledge from CAP to mobilize communities of color to vote and fight for civil rights in all its forms.

Ishraq Ali

Ishraq Ali is a digital and meticulous base-building strategist devoted to building diverse and active civil society, specifically focused on community mobilization and voting, in Boston and New York City, and now in California. He worked with New York Communities for Change, where he recruited and developed leaders in working-class communities of color on successful civic engagement, fair housing, and grassroots campaigns. He also worked for the Long Island Civic Engagement Table, where he recruited, trained, and supervised staff and volunteers on a campaign to register more than 4,500 voters in Suffolk County, NY. He coordinated canvassing, phone banks, GOTV events, and training for community leaders, schools, businesses, civic groups, and religious institutions. Mr. Ali currently works at the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition.

Shahed Amanullah

Shahed Amanullah is a serial entrepreneur who has founded and sold several startup businesses, including Affinis Labs, a Virginia startup incubator for businesses with positive social impacts in global Muslim communities. Through Affinis Labs, he organizes global hackathons to create innovative businesses and craft new media initiatives that drive social impact. He also serves as CEO of LaunchPosse, a Washington-based startup that helps people leverage their social networks for entrepreneurship. Prior to starting LaunchPosse, Shahed served as Senior Advisor for Technology at the U.S. Department of State, where he worked under Secretaries of State John Kerry and Hillary Clinton. Shahed holds a B.S. from UC-Berkeley (where he served as Student Body Vice-President) and an MBA from Georgetown. He is a 2016 Truman National Security Fellow and has been named three times (2009, 2010, and 2011) as one of the 500 most influential Muslims in the world.

Dr. Saud Anwar

Dr. Saud Anwar is the Mayor of South Windsor, CT. Dr. Anwar is a physician who specializes in lung diseases and critical care medicine. Currently, he serves as Chair of the Department of Internal Medicine of Manchester Memorial and Rockville General Hospitals. Dr. Anwar is involved in humanitarian and peace initiatives nationally and internationally. He is frequently invited to consult for the U.S. government and has organized medical missions for disaster relief. His efforts have been recognized at the state and federal levels and by several professional organizations. Dr. Anwar has received citations for his service to the State of Connecticut from Governor Rell, Attorney General Blumenthal, Secretary of State Bysiewicz, and members of the General Assembly. In addition, Dr. Anwar is an expert on international affairs. He is frequently invited to appear on national and international television and radio such as those hosted by Wolf Blitzer, Deborah Fayerck, and Susan Candiotti of CNN; NBC-30; CTN; Fox-61; NPR; Vectone TV-UK; Geo TV-Forum; and Voice of America.

Dr. Abbas Barzegar

Dr. Abbas Barzegar is an Assistant Professor of Islam at Georgia State University and a Fellow with the Institute of Social Policy and Understanding. With Richard Martin he is co-editor of the volume *Islamism: Contested Perspective of Political Islam* (Stanford, 2009). His views have been distributed through Common Ground News and *The Guardian's* Comment is Free. His scholarly research concerns the history of the Sunni-Shi'a conflict. He received his Ph.D. in religious studies from Emory University.

Dr. Hatem Bazian

Dr. Hatem Bazian is a co-founder and Professor of Islamic Law and Theology at Zaytuna College. In addition, Dr. Bazian is a lecturer in the Departments of Near Eastern and Asian American and Asian Diaspora Studies at the University of California-Berkeley. He teaches courses on Islamic Law and Society, Islam in America: Communities and Institutions, De-Constructing Islamophobia and Othering of Islam, Religious Studies, and Middle Eastern Studies. Before teaching at Berkeley, Dr. Bazian served as a Visiting Professor of Religious Studies at Saint Mary's College of California 2001–2007 and adviser to the Religion, Politics and Globalization Center at UC-Berkeley. Dr. Bazian founded the Islamophobia Research and Documentation Project at the Center for Race and Gender at Berkeley, a research unit dedicated to the systematic study of Othering Islam and Muslims. Dr. Bazian is founder and national chair of American Muslims for Palestine, board member of the Muslim Legal Fund of America, and chair of the Northern California Islamic Council.

Zahra Billoo

Zahra Billoo is a civil rights attorney and the Executive Director of the San Francisco Bay Area office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). Zahra strives to promote justice and understanding at local and national levels. She frequently provides trainings at local mosques and universities as part of CAIR's efforts to empower the community while building bridges with allies on key civil rights issues. A 2010 recipient of the San Francisco Minority Bar Coalition's Unity Award and a 2011 recipient of the South Asian Bar Association of Northern California's Public Interest Attorney of the Year Award, Ms. Billoo has been a devoted labor rights advocate for several years. She earned her J.D. from the University of California, Hastings College of Law, and was admitted to the California Bar in 2009.

Congressman Andre Carson

Congressman Andre Carson is currently serving in his 4th full term in the U.S. House of Representatives, for Indiana's 7th Congressional District. Carson serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Congressman Carson consistently fights for the middle class, having secured hundreds of millions of dollars for investments in public safety, education, infrastructure, and the creation and protection of thousands of good-paying jobs. Carson fought to pass the historic health care reform law. As a former member of the House Financial Services Committee, he also helped pass Wall Street reform legislation. In the 114th Congress, Congressman Carson serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, where he is the ranking member on the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management. Additionally, Carson was selected for membership to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, which oversees the U.S. intelligence and intelligence-related activities. During the 114th Congress, Carson serves as a Senior Whip for the House Democratic Caucus, sits on the powerful Democratic Steering and Policy Committee, and is a member of the Congressional Black Caucus' Executive Leadership Team. President Obama has signed into law three pieces of legislation authored by Congressman Carson: Service Members Mental Health Screening Act; Military Families Financial Preparedness Act; and Military Suicide Reduction Act. Congressman Carson is an Indianapolis native. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice Management from Concordia University-Wisconsin and a Master's in Business Management from Indiana Wesleyan University. Before taking office, Congressman Carson served on the Indianapolis City-County Council and worked full-time in law enforcement.

Tamim Chowdhury

Tamim Chowdhury graduated from the University of Illinois with a B.A. in Philosophy, B.S. in Finance, and obtained his M.A. in Education, and coaching certificates in Emotional Intelligence, Social Intelligence and Transformational Leadership from Wright Graduate University. He currently serves as the National Executive Director of Emerge USA. Prior to assuming his role at Emerge USA, Mr. Chowdhury spent 14 years with the federal government, where he served in various roles as a contracting officer, policy analyst, and project manager for regional and national program initiatives.

Congressman Keith Ellison

Congressman Keith Ellison represents Minnesota's 5th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. Rep. Ellison's guiding philosophy is based on "generosity and inclusion" and his priorities in Congress are building prosperity for working families, promoting peace, pursuing environmental sustainability, and advancing civil and human rights. Rep. Ellison's commitment to consumer justice led him to write legislation that was included in the Credit Cardholder's Bill of Rights of 2009. Rep. Ellison also wrote the Protecting Tenants in Foreclosure Act, which requires banks and other new owners to provide at least 90 days' notice of eviction to renters occupying foreclosed homes.

As a member of the House Financial Services Committee, the congressman helps oversee the nation's financial services and housing industries, as well as Wall Street. He also serves on the House Democratic Steering & Policy Committee. In the past he served on the House Judiciary Committee and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Rep. Ellison was elected co-chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus for the 113th Congress, which promotes the progressive promise of fairness for all. He is also a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, founded the Congressional Consumer Justice Caucus, and belongs to more than a dozen other caucuses that focus on issues ranging from social inclusion to environmental protection. Before being elected to Congress Rep. Ellison was a noted community activist and ran a thriving civil rights, employment, and criminal defense law practice in Minneapolis. He also was elected to serve two terms in the Minnesota State House of Representatives. Keith was born and raised in Detroit, Michigan. He has lived in Minnesota since earning his law degree from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1990.

Rahfin Faruk, Project Advisor

Rahfin is a Harry S. Truman Scholar, he graduated summa cum laude from Southern Methodist University (SMU) with degrees in economics, political science, public policy, and religious studies. He has worked at Grameen Bank, the U.S. Department of State, the American Red Cross, and McKinsey & Company. At SMU, he served as the sole student trustee to the Board of Trustees, the executive director of the Tower Center Student Forum, the student wing of the political studies center, and editor in chief of his school's paper, *The Daily Campus*. His work has also been published in the *Dallas Morning News*.

Dr. Marshall Ganz

Dr. Marshall Ganz is a senior lecturer in public policy at the Kennedy School of Government, where he teaches, researches, and writes on leadership, organization, and strategy in social movements, civic associations, and politics. He has published in *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Political Science Review*, *American Prospect*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and elsewhere. His newest book, *Why David Sometimes Wins: leadership, organization and strategy in the California farm worker movement*, was published in 2009. Dr. Ganz was awarded an MPA by the Kennedy School in 1993 and completed his Ph.D. in sociology in 2000. In 1964 he left Harvard to volunteer with the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project. He found a calling as an organizer for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and, in the fall of 1965, joined Cesar Chavez in his effort to unionize California farm workers. During 16 years with the United Farm Workers he gained experience in union, political, and community organizing; became Director of Organizing; and was elected to the national executive where he served for 8 years. During the 1980s, he worked with grassroots groups to develop new organizing programs and designed innovative voter mobilization strategies for local, state, and national electoral campaigns.

Hoda Hawa

Hoda Hawa is the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) Director of Policy and Advocacy. Ms. Hawa oversees MPAC's strategic initiatives in government and policy by engaging those circles at the highest levels and developing an active constituency around policy. Ms. Hawa has written and spoken on subjects ranging from international religious freedom and national security to free expression and bullying. She has been featured on BBC, Al Hurra TV, Fox News, Voice of America, NPR, MSNBC, and C-SPAN. Ms. Hawa spoke at the first-ever White House event honoring and highlighting the contributions of American Muslim women during Women's History Month. Ms. Hawa writes frequently on issues that affect Americans both domestically and internationally, with a particular emphasis on those issues that affect American Muslims. She also has experience in dialogue development groups, interfaith activities, and conflict resolution. Ms. Hawa holds a B.A. in Political Science from George Washington University with a concentration

on international affairs and the Middle East, and a master's in Ethics, Peace and Global Affairs focusing on Islam, ethics, and conflict resolution from American University's School of International Service.

Dr. Sally Howell

Dr. Sally Howell is Associate Professor of History in the Center for Arab American Studies and the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. Her Ph.D. is from the Program in American Culture at the University of Michigan. Her books include *Citizenship and Crisis* (2009), co-authored with Wayne Baker, et al.; *Arab Detroit 9/11: Life in the Terror Decade* (2011), edited with Nabeel Abraham and Andrew Shryock; and *Old Islam in Detroit: Rediscovering the Muslim American Past* (2014). *Old Islam in Detroit* was named a Michigan Notable Book of 2015 by the Library of Michigan and awarded the 2015 Evelyn Shakir Award for non-fiction by the Arab American National Museum. Her current research explores the relationship between mosques, markets, and community development in Michigan and the mutual constitution of local publics and religious minorities across the urban and suburban landscape.

Dr. Altaf Husain

Dr. Altaf Husain serves as Associate Professor and Chair of the Community, Administration and Policy Practice Concentration in the Howard University School of Social Work, in Washington, DC. He holds a joint appointment as a Research Fellow in the Center for the Study of American Muslims and the Center for Global Health at the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding in Washington. He received his Ph.D. in Social Work from Howard University and his M.S.S.A. from the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University, in Cleveland, Ohio. His professional involvement includes serving as a co-chair of the Islam and Muslims track of the Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) and as a founding member of the CSWE Religion and Spirituality Working Group. Dr. Husain's community involvement includes serving as Vice President (US) of the Islamic Society of North America, and a former two-term national president of MSA National. He also serves as an advisory board member of the Peaceful Families Project, which is dedicated to preventing domestic violence.

Dr. Sherman Jackson

Dr. Jackson is the King Faisal Chair of Islamic Thought and Culture, and Professor of Religion and American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. He was formerly the Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of Near Eastern Studies and Visiting Professor of Law and Professor of Afro-American Studies at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor). Dr. Jackson received his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of several books, including *Islamic Law and the State: The Constitutional Jurisprudence of Shihâb al-Dîn al-Qarâfî* (E.J. Brill, 1996), *On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam: Abû Hâmid al-Ghazâlî's Faysal al-Tafrîqa* (Oxford, 2002), *Islam and the Blackamerican: Looking Toward the Third Resurrection* (Oxford, 2005), *Islam and the Problem of Black Suffering* (Oxford, 2009), and most recently, *Sufism for Non-Sufis? Ibn 'Ata' Allah al-Sakandari's Taj al-'Arus* (Oxford, 2012). Dr. Jackson is a co-founder, Core Scholar, and member of the Board of Trustees of the American Learning Institute for Muslims. Additionally, Dr. Jackson is a former member of the Fiqh Council of North America, former President of the Shari'ah Scholars' Association of North America, and a past trustee of the North American Islamic Trust. He has contributed to several publications including the *Washington Post-Newsweek* blog, *On Faith*, and the *Huffington Post*. Dr. Jackson is listed by the Religion Newswriters Foundation's ReligionLink as among the top ten experts on Islam in America and was named among the 500 most influential Muslims in the world by the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Center in Amman, Jordan, and the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding.

Dr. Amaney Jamal, Project Advisor

Dr. Jamal is the Edwards S. Sanford Professor of Politics at Princeton University and director of the Mamdouha S. Bobst Center for Peace and Justice. Dr. Jamal also directs the Workshop on Arab Political Development. She currently is President of the Association of Middle East Women's Studies. Dr. Jamal's books include *Barriers to Democracy*, which explores the role of civic associations in promoting democratic effects in the Arab world; and, as coauthor, *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects* (2007), *Citizenship and Crisis: Arab Detroit after 9/11* (2009), and *Of Empires and Citizens* (2012). Amaney is a co-director of Princeton's Luce Project on Migration, Participation, and Democratic Governance in the U.S., Europe, and the Muslim World; principal investigator of the Arab Barometer Project; winner of the Best Dataset in the Field of Comparative Politics (2010); co-PI of the Detroit Arab American Study, a sister survey to the Detroit Area Study; and senior advisor on the Pew Research Center projects focusing on Islam in America (2006) and Global Islam (2010). Dr. Jamal received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan and was named a Carnegie Scholar in 2005.

Dr. Muqtedar Khan, Project Advisor

Dr. Khan is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Delaware. He founded the Islamic Studies Program at the University of Delaware and was its first director from 2007 to 2010. Dr. Khan is a fellow at the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding. He was also a Senior Nonresident Fellow with the Brookings Institution (2003–2008) and a Fellow of the Alwaleed Center at Georgetown University (2006–2007). He has been the President, Vice President, and General Secretary of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists. He is the author of *American Muslims: Bridging Faith and Freedom* (Amana, 2002), *Jihad for Jerusalem: Identity and Strategy in International Relations* (Praeger, 2004), *Islamic Democratic Discourse* (Lexington Books, 2006) and *Debating Moderate Islam: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West* (University of Utah Press, 2007). Dr. Khan frequently comments on BBC, CNN International, Fox News, VOA TV, Bridges TV, NPR, and other radio and TV networks. His political commentaries appear regularly in newspapers in more than 20 countries. He has lectured internationally. Dr. Khan earned his Ph.D. in International Relations, Political Philosophy, and Islamic Political Thought from Georgetown University.

Suhail Khan

Suhail Khan currently serves as the Director of External Affairs at Microsoft. Mr. Khan is the Senior Fellow for Christian-Muslim Understanding at the Institute for Global Engagement. He previously served as the Policy Director and Press Secretary for U.S. Congressman Tom Campbell (R-CA), working closely on a variety of legislative initiatives, including religious freedom. He also served as a senior political appointee with the Bush administration. He served in the White House Office of Public Liaison, assisting in the President's outreach to various faith communities. Mr. Khan also served as Assistant to the Secretary for Policy under U.S. Secretary Mary Peters at the U.S. Department of Transportation. Suhail serves on the boards of the American Conservative Union, the Islamic Free Market Institute, the Muslim Public Service Network, the Indian American Republican Council, and on the Buxton Initiative Advisory Council. He has spoken at venues such as the Conservative Political Action Conference, the Council for National Policy, the Harbour League, and the National Press Club. He has written opinion pieces for various publications including the *Washington Post/Newsweek* Forum on Faith.

Zeba Khan

Zeba Khan is a social and political commentator focused on Islam, and more generally race, religion, and politics in the United States. Her writing has appeared in numerous outlets including *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Post*, and CNN. Ms. Khan has appeared on CNN, NPR, and ABC World News, and has been an invited speaker at events with The New America Foundation & the University of California–Berkeley. She has also contributed to policy projects at the RAND Center for Middle East Public Policy & the Faith and Progressive Policy Initiative at The Center for American Progress. Ms. Khan is a 2016 Security Fellow with the Truman Project.

Nadeem Mazen

Nadeem Mazen is an educator, entrepreneur, and community organizer. He was elected to Cambridge City Council in 2013 after an energetic grassroots campaign. In his first term, he has made city government more accessible to the public and built coalitions for solving Cambridge's most pressing issues. He has also focused on social justice issues and greater equity for all members of our community. In 2015, Nadeem "topped the ticket" in Cambridge by earning the most votes of any candidate and doubling his vote total after his freshman term. Nadeem has a degree in engineering from MIT. He founded two small community-oriented businesses in Central Square Cambridge: Nimblebot, a creative agency, and danger!awesome, a makerspace that brings creative expression and tools to the masses.

Dr. Rami Nashashibi

Dr. Rami Nashashibi holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Chicago and serves as an adjunct professor at various colleges and universities across the Chicagoland area, where he teaches a range of Social Science courses. Dr. Nashashibi has served as the Executive Director of the Inner-City Muslim Action Network since its incorporation as a nonprofit organization in January 1997. Dr. Nashashibi lectures nationally and internationally on a range of topics related to American Muslim identity, community activism, and social justice issues, and is a recipient of several prestigious community service and organizing honors. Dr. Nashashibi has been profiled among the "10 Young Muslim Visionaries Shaping Islam in America" and, in 2007 and 2009, Chicago Public Radio selected Rami as one of the city's Top Ten Chicago Global Visionaries. Dr. Nashashibi was named one of the "500 Most Influential Muslims in the World." He was named a White House "Champion of Change" in 2011, and was also invited by the governor of Illinois to serve on the Commission for the Elimination of Poverty and as a member of the Governor's Muslim Advisory Council.

Hiam Nawas

Hiam Nawas is an analyst based in Washington with more than a decade of experience advising the Democratic National Committee and elected officials on issues related to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) as well as Political Islam. She also has significant experience working on issues related to the U.S. military's relationship with partners in MENA and Central Asia. Ms. Nawas has earned degrees in Islamic Law and Business Administration, lives and works in the Washington area, and claims Arkansas as her home state.

Dr. Yasir Qadhi

Dr. Yasir Qadhi holds M.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D. degrees from the Department of Religious Studies at Yale University. He has a Bachelors in Hadith Studies and an M.A. in Islamic Theology from the University of Medina. He also has a B.Sc. in Chemical Engineering from the University of Houston. He currently serves as the resident Scholar of the Memphis Islamic Center, a professor at Rhodes College in the Department of religious Studies, and the Dean of Academic Affairs at Al Maghrib Institute. Dr. Qadhi has authored several books, published academic articles, and appeared on numerous satellite and TV stations around the globe. His online videos are of the most popular and highly watched Islamic videos in English.

Sam Rasoul

Sam Rasoul serves in the Virginia House of Delegates as a Democrat representing the 11th District, including part of the City of Roanoke. He was elected in January 2014 in a special election and received 70 percent of the vote. Mr. Rasoul is the only Muslim member of the Virginia General Assembly.

Linda Sarsour

Linda Sarsour is a national racial justice and civil rights activist. She is a Palestinian-Muslim-American born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. Linda is the co-founder of the first Muslim online organizing platform, MPower Change, and Executive Director of the Arab American Association of New York.

Oz Sultan

Oz Sultan is a Big Data Strategist who has worked with the U.S. Peacetechlab, the Economist, startups, and Finance + Fortune 1000 brands over the past decade. He is also a conservative Muslim pundit who is actively working to build interfaith and intercultural dialogue. He has previously been in the top 30 of Top Conservatives on Twitter and is continually searching for the most perfect hamburger in America.

Yasmine Taeb

Yasmine Taeb is an experienced human rights and civil liberties lobbyist who currently works for the Friends Committee on National Legislation on a number of issues, including lobbying for the closure of the U.S. detention center in Guantanamo; against the U.S. lethal drones program; and for increased funding and resettlement of Syrian refugees. Previously, Ms. Taeb served as project manager at the Center for American Progress (CAP) and is the co-author of CAP's Islamophobia report, "Fear, Inc. 2.0: The Islamophobia Network's Efforts to Manufacture Hate in America."

Rashida Tlaib, Project Advisor

Rashida Tlaib is a longtime resident of Detroit and the child of Palestinian immigrants. Rashida is a former Michigan State Representative where she served three terms and was appointed as the democratic vice chairwoman of the Appropriation Committee. While in the Michigan House, she worked on more than 30 bills that aimed to combat poverty, increase access to human services, protect our public health and environment, and promote public safety and consumer protection. She is an attorney and practiced immigration law before she began her policy advocacy career. Rashida received her bachelor's from Wayne State University in 1998 and J.D. from Thomas Cooley Law School. Rashida's most important accomplishment has been establishing a neighborhood service center, which has more than twelve different programs offered to low-income families. Rashida currently serves at the community partnerships and development director at the Sugar Law Center for Economic & Social. Rashida made history by becoming the first female Muslim elected to the Michigan Legislature, and only second in the country.

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ISPU is an independent, nonpartisan research organization specializing in addressing the most pressing challenges facing the American Muslim community and in bridging the information gap between the American Muslim community and the wider society. Through objective, empirical applied research ISPU supports the American Muslim community to develop, contribute and innovate, offering actionable recommendations to inform community change agents, the media, the general public and policy makers alike. In addition to building in-house capacity, ISPU has assembled leading experts across multiple disciplines, building a solid reputation as a trusted source for information for and about American Muslims.

Institute for Social Policy and Understanding

6 Parklane Blvd., Suite 510
Dearborn, Michigan 48126

Tel: 1-800-920-ISPU or 1-800-920-4778
www.ispu.org • Email: info@ispu.org

Washington, DC

1110 Vermont Ave. NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005

Tel: 202-768-8751