

In the name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.
All praise and thanks belong to God, the Lord of the Worlds.
May peace and prayers be upon Prophet Muhammad and his family.



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March 13, 2026

Subject: CAIR: A Call on the Republican Party to Affirm Religious Freedom for All Americans, Including Muslims

Dear U.S. House and Senate Republican Chiefs of Staff, Legislative Directors, and Communications Directors:

I write on behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), our nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization. We write to correct misinformation about the American Muslim community and request that your offices reaffirm the Republican Party's support of religious freedom for all Americans, including American Muslims.

As you know, [Rep. Andy Ogles recently declared that “Muslims don’t belong in American society.”](#) while Rep. Randy Fine recently called for the destruction of [“mainstream Muslims.”](#) Senator Tommy Tuberville has called for a ban on the practice of Islam. So have members of the new "Sharia-Free America" Caucus.

Just as it would be completely unacceptable to declare that Jewish Americans do not belong in American society, or that all "mainstream Jews" should be destroyed, it is unacceptable to use such hateful rhetoric against American Muslims. It also flouts the longstanding principles of the Republican Party.

Many Muslim Americans believe that the Republican Party still can and should embody the “big tent” vision articulated by President Ronald Reagan. Two decades ago, around half of the American Muslim voters voted Republican because of the party's stated support religious freedom, family values and economic opportunity.

Although support for Republicans fell drastically in the wake of the Bush administration and the Iraq war, at least one third of American Muslims have supported Republican candidates in recent years, contributing to President Trump's surprisingly strong showing in places like Michigan.

However, that potential relationship between the Republican Party and American Muslim voters is rapidly deteriorating as anti-Muslim rhetoric from elected officials goes unchallenged by Republican leadership.

At moments like this, leadership matters. For years, Republicans have expressed strong support for the Constitution’s guarantee of religious freedom. There is no justification for allowing

figures like Rep. Fine and Rep. Ogles to use their platforms to erode religious freedom for one group of Americans.

Threatening religious freedom for American Muslims ultimately threatens religious freedom for all Americans. And standing up for the rights of people of faith should not be a controversial act; it is a constitutional obligation.

Finally, we want to very clearly address the most common attacks we hear aimed at American Muslims.

1. American Muslims condemn and reject terrorism. Every major American Muslim institution, elected official, scholarly body and advocacy group has condemned terrorism for years. From the 9/11 attacks to the recent spate of attacks in Virginia, Michigan, and New York City, this criminal violence is unacceptable to our community. Whether motivated by grievances with American foreign policy or ideological religious extremism, terrorism is unacceptable. Period. In fact, CAIR and other American Muslim groups condemned ISIS' violence so often that the group put our national executive director and other American Muslim leaders on a public hit list.

2. American Muslims can and do follow the rules of their faith (i.e., sharia) in their private lives. Just as canon law refers to the interpreted rules of Catholicism and halakha refers to the interpreted rules of Judaism, sharia (literally "the path") refers to the interpreted rules of Islam. When Muslims pray to God five times a day, fast in Ramadan, tithe annually, and abstain from drinking alcohol or eating pork, among other traditions, they are practicing sharia.

Most aspects of sharia, or Islamic law, involve private religious life, such as rules related to prayer, fasting, charity, marriage, inheritance, burial, and personal ethics. Other aspects of sharia involve rules that only a government in a Muslim nation could implement, such as teachings related to tax collection and criminal punishment. **American Muslims obviously cannot and do not enforce such governmental rules in our nation.**

Moreover, the existence of such governmental rules in a religion is not unique to Islam. The Bible contains various rules related to governance, including penalties for murder, theft, adultery, violating the Sabbath and even apostasy. Yet no members of Congress are calling for bans on Jewish Halakah and Catholic Canon law because that would be irrational and unconstitutional. Jewish and Christian Americans cannot impose the governmental aspects of the Bible in America, and neither can Muslim Americans. **Under the Constitution, people of faith in America can follow the rules of their own faith in their personal lives, but they cannot impose those rules on others.**

Ironically, this is also a rule of sharia. Muslims living in non-Muslim societies must obey the laws of the land so long as those laws do not compel them to engage in indisputably immoral conduct, according to sharia itself.

3. Anti-Muslim hate speech leads to real world consequences. CAIR's [2026 Civil Rights Report, "The Right to Be Different,"](#) documented **8,683 reports of anti-Muslim bias**

incidents in 2025, the highest number CAIR has recorded in a single year. When elected officials portray American Muslims as outsiders or threats, that rhetoric contributes directly to a climate in which discrimination, harassment, and violence increase.

We hope these facts clarify some of the misinformation you may have heard about American Muslims and Islam. For years, Republicans have expressed strong support for the Constitution's guarantee of religious freedom. There is no way to destroy religious freedom for just one group of Americans. Threatening religious freedom for American Muslims threatens religious freedom for all Americans. Protecting the rights of a religious group you may disagree with is not a partisan act; it is a constitutional obligation that protects the rights of all Americans.

We stand ready to answer your questions and work with you to support religious freedom for everyone in our nation. We encourage you to issue statements affirming your support for the First Amendment and religious freedom for all, including American Muslims, regardless of theological or political differences.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert S. McCaw". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert S. McCaw
Government Affairs Department Director
Council on American-Islamic Relations