

## **As a Dog Returns to its Vomit: Anti-Muslim Extremism in Oklahoma in 2026**

---

*“As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly.”  
Proverbs 26:11, New International Version translation*

In recent months, powerful public officials across our nation tried to tell Americans that our freedoms come with their conditions. We must look, speak, think, and worship in their approved ways or we do not belong.

In Oklahoma, anti-Muslim extremists manifested these conditions by repeating a 2010 campaign seeking to essentially ban the practice of the world’s second largest religion in the state and deprive Muslims of places of worship. The effort to deny First Amendment protected freedom of religion in Oklahoma included legislative action, zoning, and the investigative power of the state.

The First Amendment is not a privilege that government grants to Americans. It is a right that neither government nor public polling can touch. Public disfavor of a minority faith is not a credible basis to mobilize the government’s investigatory power.

When politicians claim the power to decide which religions are acceptable and which are not, and when investigations can be launched simply due to public disfavor of a particular religion, every congregation in the state should be paying attention.

Oklahoma taxpayers already footed the bill for a politician’s misadventure into banning the world’s second largest religion in the state. They should not have to pay the price for such unconstitutional folly a second time.

### **What Matters Most**

1. Oklahoma is one of five states where community complaints reported to CAIR, the nation’s largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy group, increased [in each of the last three years](#).
2. In 2025, State Rep. Gabe Woolley (R-Broken Arrow) resurrected an anti-Muslim extremist state constitutional amendment that the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled unconstitutional in 2012. Woolley’s measure uses the same name and substantially the same language as the previous measure. Woolley appears to believe that a new administration combined with the passage of 16 years opens a window for him to dictate what religions Oklahomans are permitted to practice.
3. Oklahomans have practiced the Islamic faith for decades. The Islamic Society of Tulsa was established in 1977. In 2020, there were a reported 16 mosques in Oklahoma. A 2023–24 estimate says Muslims are less than 1 percent of the state’s population.
4. In 2014, the Islamic Society of Tulsa felt its congregation had grown beyond its current facility and purchased land for a future second place of worship in Broken Arrow. After a December 2025 hearing on the proposal, journalist Dion Lefler wrote, “In my more than 40 years of journalism, covering thousands of public meetings, I’ve never seen one where bigotry and hatred were expressed so openly and applauded so loudly.”

5. By January 2026, opponents of the proposed Broken Arrow mosque were being coached to mute their anti-Muslim bigotry and use ChatGPT to write speeches that were more palatable to city councilors. City councilors ultimately rejected the mosque's routine zoning request.
6. The coaching session organizers included a man who believes, "We don't want a particular world view in our community that is diametrically opposed to us." An organization founded by a couple that the Department of Labor says "falsified their certified payroll reports" and "compounded their violations by also obstructing the investigation" provided anti-Islam handouts for the coaching session.
7. Handouts used for the coaching session were also distributed in Sapulpa with text disparaging a candidate for office who is of Iranian origin.
8. Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond, who had previously rejected enhanced surveillance of Muslims, announced an investigation into the proposed mosque, citing "substantial public concern." Substantial public concern is neither an indicator of wrongdoing nor an investigative lead.

## Oklahoma's Muslim Community Has Been Part of the State for Decades and Feeding, Healing, and Serving Their Neighbors

*"I am immensely proud of Oklahomans of all races, creeds and faiths. They have come together in shared anguish and shared pride...May Allah bless you always."*

*Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating, April 26, 1995, days after anti-government extremists bombed the Murrah Federal Building<sup>i</sup>*

Islam is an American religion. Muslims have been present in [significant numbers in the country since the colonial era](#). At that time, most Muslims arrived in the holds of slave ships, in chains, with no religious or individual liberty.

Islam is not new in Oklahoma. In 1977, the Islamic Society of Tulsa [was founded](#). The Islamic Society of Greater Oklahoma City (ISGOC) was [established in 1997](#). There were [16 mosques reported in Oklahoma](#) in the 2020 American Mosque Survey. The 2010 version of the survey reported 17.

Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Study for 2023–24 says [Muslims are less than one percent of Oklahoma's population](#).

Muslims contribute to the betterment of life for everyone in Oklahoma. Dr. Imad Enchassi's service in Oklahoma has been acknowledged with Oklahoma City's Dialogue Institute 'Dialogue Award,' the Interfaith Alliance's 'Community Service Award,' and [the Oklahoma Center for Community and Justice's CCJ 'Humanitarian Award'](#). In 2020, Mauree Turner became the ["first Muslim lawmaker elected to the state's legislature."](#) Turner served until 2024. Navy veteran Saad Mohammed was given the 'Outstanding Muslim of the Year' award by the Governor's Ethnic Advisory Council [in 2009](#).

Islam's [everyday religious principles drive its adherents in Oklahoma to humanitarian work](#).

Following the horrific terror attack in Oklahoma City in 1995 CAIR researchers wrote in ["The Rush to Judgement"](#) that, "Many of Oklahoma City's estimated 5,000 Muslims took part in the relief effort. The president of the city's American Muslim Association and his wife — a cardiologist and anesthesiologist — both volunteered at area hospitals the day of the explosion." Unfortunately, at the same time, "The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) reported that a [Muslim in Oklahoma City was met with hostility in her attempt to donate blood for the bomb victims](#)." Initial reporting inaccurately pointed a possible Middle Eastern connection to the attack, which drove backlash against Arabs and Muslims around the country. The actual perpetrators, reportedly motivated by white supremacist and anti-government ideologies, were later detained.

ICNA Relief operates a [food pantry and free medical clinic in Oklahoma City](#). The Shifa Clinic offers free health screenings and primary care appointments for Oklahomans. The food pantry, also known as Mercy Food Pantry, is

open most weekends. They “are open to all zip codes and are not income based,” [running a first-come, first-served model](#). MAS-Oklahoma’s Muslims Giving Back (MGB) has “volunteers fulfill the needs of the underprivileged by giving [back to the community at large](#).”

Muslims4Mercy collected and delivered donations to Hurricane Harvey survivors in Texas. In 2017, NBC News reported that the group planned to “deliver 100 meals after Friday religious services to people across Tulsa” and hoped to “[eventually work up to three days a week with the help of local churches and synagogues](#).” The group appears to be currently inactive.

In sport, Enes Kanter Freedom played for the Oklahoma City Thunder from 2014–2017.

Nationally, Muslims are job creators, represent an estimated \$170 billion in purchasing power, and comprise 4.5 to 5 percent of the nation’s physicians. According to the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU), Muslims are more likely than the public to be self-employed. ISPU also finds Muslims are as likely as other faith groups and the public [to serve in the U.S. military](#). Muslim physicians [comprise 4.5 to five percent](#) of the nation’s total. A [2015 study estimated](#) that America’s Muslims represent \$170 billion in spending power.

Muslim philanthropy for both faith-based and non-faith-based causes is higher than among non-Muslims. As of 2021, Muslims on average gave USD 1,810 to faith-based causes compared to USD 1,138 [in the general population](#).

## **Context: In 2025, Efforts to Ban the Practices of the World’s Second Largest Religion in the U.S. Reignited in Texas and Quickly Surged**

Texas Governor Greg Abbott appears to have reignited efforts to ban Islamic religious practices in the U.S. in February 2025. In online spaces, two studies found a surge in the volume of anti-Muslim posting. This was accompanied by efforts by a number of public officials, 63 had joined a U.S. House Caucus created to ban Islamic religious practices by early 2026, to push Islam and Muslims out of the circle of protected religious and civic life in the United States.

In February 2025, Gov. Abbott [reshared of one of anti-Muslim activist Amy Mek’s posts](#) about a Muslim-led development project in the state.<sup>ii</sup> By year’s end Abbott’s anti-Muslim campaign targeted an Islamic Center, a proposed mosque-centered development, Muslim burial practices, Islamic mediation services, Islamic schools, and CAIR.

In 2026, researchers at the Center for the Study of Organized Hate (CSOH) concluded, “What began with a single gubernatorial repost in February 2025 has grown, within thirteen months, into an operation involving 89 Republican elected officials, including 86 members of Congress across three reinforcing tracks: 1,111 social media posts by 46 elected officials, eight pieces of legislation across both chambers of Congress, and a formal congressional caucus with 62 members. This represents an unprecedented level of coordinated anti-Muslim bigotry by elected officials in the U.S.”

“The speed and scale of escalation” of this social media posting is their most “[significant finding](#)” the researchers wrote. CSOH also determined that these 46 Republicans public officials’ posting included “explicit endorsement of, or incitement to, violence against Muslims” and “[I]anguage that, when issued by state actors, amounts to the advocacy of ethnic cleansing through policy.”

Equality Labs analyzed more than 4.7 million Islamophobic social media posts and found that in 2025, “[Muslim Americans quickly became among the most intensively targeted groups in coordinated disinformation campaigns](#).”

In March 2026, CAIR’s researchers noted [several outcomes of anti-Muslim extremism in 2025](#):

1. Islamophobia remained at an all-time high in the United States. CAIR received 8,683 complaints nationwide in 2025, the highest number of single-year complaints CAIR had recorded since its first civil rights report covering 1996 was published.
2. Florida, Illinois, Minnesota, Oklahoma, and Texas were identified as national standouts in a record-setting year.
3. Anti-Muslim narratives more clearly resurfaced in 2025, particularly the notion that the religious principles followed by Muslims are inherently threatening and anti-American.
4. Government officials used collective and ideological punishment to target both non-citizens and citizens who were perceived to be ethnically or ideologically undesirable.

All of this built on a previous foundation.

The Othering and Belonging Center at UC Berkeley's Islamophobia Legislative Database shows that efforts to pass laws that disfavor Islam and Muslims started in 2010, peaked in 2011, went into serious decline after 2017, [and were non-existent by 2023](#).

In 2013, former Gallup researcher Dalia Mogahed presented a research-backed argument that "levels of anti-Muslim sentiment" tend to follow "[trends in domestic U.S. politics](#), not international terrorism." "Leaders shape how people interpret events," Mogahed wrote. She cited President Bush's visit to a mosque and September 20, 2001, speech to a Congress in the days after the 9/11 attacks as an example of a tone setting, "because the leader of the nation rightly helped distinguish between Islam and terrorism."

The 2010 mid-term election is often used as an example of domestic U.S. politics impacting anti-Muslim sentiment. In that case the spark was anti-Muslim extremist Pamela Geller's reframing of a previously non-controversial effort to build the Park 51 Islamic religious and culture center in lower Manhattan into a threat. Public officials and candidates contesting the election used Islamophobia as "an instrumental tool in the efforts of Tea Party and Republican activists to [reshape the debate into one focused on national security issues](#)."

CAIR has also detailed two large waves of Islamophobia generated by Donald Trump's [2015 announcement and 2017 implementation of his Muslim Ban](#).

## **Back From the Legal Graveyard: Lawmakers Revive Anti-Muslim Ban Courts Struck Down as Discriminatory**

In 2010, the year Islamophobia was a hot mid-term election tool, Oklahoma legislators attempted to enact the "Save Our State" amendment, uniquely singling out Islam and Muslims for government discrimination.

Two years later, the 10th Circuit Court ruled that the amendment "exposes [the plaintiff in a lawsuit challenging the measure] and other Muslims in Oklahoma to disfavored treatment," that state attorneys "do not identify any actual problem the challenged amendment seeks to solve," and that those same attorneys "did not know of even a single instance where an Oklahoma court had applied Sharia law."

In 2026, Oklahoma State Rep. Gabe Woolley (R-Broken Arrow) introduced the "Save Our State" amendment, resurrecting the unconstitutional 2010 amendment's language.

As introduced, [House Joint Resolution 1040](#) "would ask Oklahoma voters to consider a constitutional amendment, the Save Our State amendment, [prohibiting the use of Sharia Law or other foreign legal systems in state courts](#)."

As part of the "gist of the proposition," the resolution that would be put before voters read, "Sharia law is Islamic law. It is based on two principal sources, the Koran and the teaching of Mohammed."

This bill is composed of substantially identical language to the 2010 measure, including the very specific language singling out Islam for government disfavor.

Oklahoma State Senator David Bullard (R–Durant) is listed as the resolution’s Senate author and introduced the companion Senate Joint Resolution 15.

Speaking to *Breitbart*, Wooley said, “[Islam and Sharia law](#)” are not compatible with the Constitution. In the same article, Sen. Bullard says, “Foreign law or religious codes which run in contradiction to our Christian Heritage of freedom and liberty will try and use our own principles to destroy us.” [\[Archive\]](#)

The Oklahoma Republican Party [adopted a resolution formally endorsing the measure’s passage](#). The GOP resolution, introduced by the Craig County Republican Committee, also praises Wooley’s leadership.

“[With a new administration and 16 years having passed](#), I believe it is time to attempt this ban once again to protect our American way of life in Oklahoma. We have seen what is happening in Dearborn, Michigan, New York, Texas and Europe. Oklahoma does not want to become the next Dearborn, Michigan.” [\[Archive\]](#) In that post, Wooley is also quoting saying Islamic religious principles are “a political ideology painted as a religion.” Wooley argues that his resolution aimed at depriving Muslims of their individual liberties is needed to protect “individual liberties.”

[CAIR previously noted](#):

*Dearborn, Michigan, “America’s city with the largest Muslim population,” is often ground zero for conspiracy theorists claiming Muslims threaten American law. In 2015, the city was “ranked by the website [onlyinyourstate.com](#) as [one of the best towns to celebrate Christmas](#).”*

*In 2024, the Trump campaign sent Gen. Michael Flynn to meet with Muslims in the Detroit, Michigan area. Trump and Flynn have engaged in anti-Muslim bias.*

*Trump’s 2017 Muslim Ban was a central theme during his 2015–16 presidential campaigning. Flynn has previously called Islam a “[cancer](#).” Neither man can be credibly accused of being an apologist for Muslims, and neither mentioned seeing the Constitution being subverted.*

*President Trump [stood onstage with a number of Detroit-area Muslim leaders during his 2024 campaign](#) and later [picked the Muslim mayor of Dearborn Heights and the Muslim mayor of Hamtramck for ambassadorships](#).*

Wooley also introduced a similar, but less directly worded resolution, [HJR 1084](#). The floor version of that bill read, “No court, the state, or any political subdivision, board, agency, or commission created by the Constitution or established by statute shall recognize or enforce any religious code, body of law, or practice that is repugnant to, incompatible with, or that does not recognize and protect the same [or equivalent individual rights and liberties guaranteed under the Constitution of the State of Oklahoma or the Constitution of the United States of America](#).”

Wooley is reported to have told legislators that “he could not identify any specific happenings in Oklahoma that warranted this resolution,” and [subsequently dropped HJR 1084](#).

## **The Anti-Muslim Playbook in Broken Arrow: Deny It’s About Religion, Then Oppose It Because of Religion**

Founded in 1977, the Islamic Society of Tulsa [found they had outgrown their current facility](#). According to the *Tulsa Flyer*, the Society purchased land for a future expansion facility in Broken Arrow in 2014.

In December 2025, the city planning commission approved a [rezoning of the land for a mosque and for retail space](#).

Commenting on the December hearing, Randy Krehbiel of the *Tulsa World* observed, “The majority of those speaking against the proposal at last month’s planning commission warned that the proposed Islamic center

would harbor terrorists, lower property values, drive away non-Muslims and broadcast, by outside loudspeakers, calls to worship at all hours of day and night.” Krehbiel quoted one speaker saying, “[They are here to conquer and kill us.](#)”

Writing in the *Wichita Eagle* on January 9, journalist Dion Lefler also spoke about the December hearing: “In my more than 40 years of journalism, covering thousands of public meetings, I’ve never seen one where [bigotry and hatred were expressed so openly and applauded so loudly.](#)”

Lefler continued:

*Some typical examples from the public comments: “What I have a problem with is their religion and that they refuse to follow our laws. They lie to our face for as long as it takes, and are here to conquer us and destroy us.”*

*“Why would we even let Islamic [people] into our country at all ever is beyond me; 493 — I don’t know if you know it — mosques across this nation. All they have to do is just send a text, ‘It’s time to take over America.’ That’s all they have to do. So why are we even considering putting another mosque in this area?”*

*“Their Bible, the Quran, says it’s OK to kill anybody who’s an infidel; an infidel is anybody who doesn’t believe the same way they do. They’re not beyond burning down our Christian churches or anything they think is opposed to them.”*

*“Islam is not a religion. It’s a misogynistic culture born of the writings of a pedophilic warlord around 570 AD...Before you call me a racist, please be aware that my dear departed wife of 37 years was half Mexican.”*

*“It’s cultural jihad. All of their religions, whether it be Shia or Sunni, they all agree on one thing: the establishment of Sharia law...Every woman in favor [of the mosque] tonight would be stoned for not wearing a burka. They would be castigated, beaten with rods. They would be thrown in a pit. We’ve seen it before, and we know what this religion does.”*

*That last speaker came to the meeting wearing a MAGA hat and a custom-printed T-shirt reading “Allah is Satan” on the front and “Muhammed [something] in Hell” on the back. I couldn’t make out the exact wording because he was wearing some kind of harness that covered part of the message, but I think I got the drift.*

On January 12, the city council voted 4–1 to deny the mosque’s [zoning request](#). The Oklahoman reported that one speaker asked the councilors to oppose the request because “[we have been at war with Islam for 40 years.](#)”

Days before the January city council meeting, on January 6, an event centered on blocking the proposed mosque drew over 200 people according to news reports.

The event was reportedly organized by Constitutional Grounds, a local conservative nonprofit. According to the *Broken Arrow Sentinel*, David Oldham, “a former officer at the Tulsa Area Republican Assembly and Tulsa County Republican Party,” [is the group’s founder](#). Speaking about the mosque, Oldham said, “We don’t want a particular world view [in our community that is diametrically opposed to us.](#)”

Materials distributed by event organizers “detailed criticisms of Islam and tied the religion to terrorism.” An image of event materials provided by 2 News Oklahoma [included the logo of Shofar International Foundation](#).

2 News Oklahoma later reported that the same booklet was distributed in Sapulpa with text disparaging a candidate for office who is of Iranian origin: “[Are you aware that David Mortazavi’s real/given name is Seyed Davood Khalili Mortazavi?](#)”

On its website, the Foundation lists among its outreach programs, “Training Leaders about Standing with Israel, Understanding Islam, and [Spiritual Warfare](#) for the Miraculous to the Nations.” [\[Archive\]](#)

Founders Kent and Christie Glesener also appear to run Paradigm Construction & Engineering, Inc. In 2024, the Department of Labor defended a judge’s ruling against the company after the company allegedly “failed to correctly classify their workers...thereby paying them below the applicable prevailing wage rates,” then “falsified their certified payroll reports” and “compounded their violations by also obstructing the investigation.” A judge ordered Paradigm Construction & Engineering, Kent Glesener, and Christie Glesener to be banned (debarred) [from federal contracts for three years](#).

According to 2 News Oklahoma, state Sen. Christi Gillespie advised attendees at the mosque opposition training to use ChatGPT to create a 3-minute speech they could take to the city council to urge the council to reject the rezoning “on feasibility grounds.”

Former state Senator Nathan Dahm used the arrest of Chicago mobster Al Capone as an example: “How did they go after and finally get rid of Al Capone? Income tax evasion. Was there a whole lot of other things going on behind the scenes that were wrong? So if you’re wanting to oppose this, even if it is from a religious perspective — which I understand and I agree with you — the city council needs valid reasons to oppose it. Reasons that say this doesn’t fit our comprehensive plan.”

Randy Krehbiel of the *Tulsa World* also observed, “Those at Tuesday’s strategy meeting, though, were advised to mute anti-Islamic sentiment — [even as organizers acknowledged that is the reason for most opposition to the project](#).”

During a meeting organized to oppose the place of worship, one participant asked about the current mosque in Tulsa, “What has it done? What purpose has it served for the surrounding cities?”

A journalist with Oklahoma’s KOTV asked the Islamic Society of Tulsa.

The Islamic Center operates a food pantry that “is open on Sundays and serves anyone within the 74135 zip code or within a two-mile radius. It’s a drive-thru, and you have to fill out a form to qualify, but no one leaves without food on their first visit.” One volunteer reported that “about 50 families come to get food, and a fourth of them are not Muslim.”

Additionally, [“The Islamic Society of Tulsa also has a free medical clinic on Sundays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. with doctors who can give basic check-ups, discounted labs, and prescriptions.”](#)

## **Oklahoma Attorney General Opens Mosque Investigation Citing Substantial Public Concern, Not Evidence of Wrongdoing**

Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond announced an investigation into the proposed mosque in Broken Arrow.

Drummond alleged an investigation was justified by “substantial public concern” about the [“ownership structure, governance and financing of the project.”](#) Drummond claimed the project was owned by the “radical Muslim Brotherhood.” Substantial public concern is neither an indicator of wrongdoing nor an investigative lead.

In 2022, Drummond responded to a candidate question, “Should local police increase surveillance and patrol of Muslim neighborhoods?” by writing, [“No, this decision should be based on crime rates instead of race or religion.”](#)

The notion that investigations should follow actual indicators of wrongdoing is reasonable. Unfounded reports and public suspicion, particularly when that suspicion is based simply on the target’s choice of faith, are not.

In the hours after the 1995 terrorist attack on the Murrah Federal Building, unfounded reports linked men “with Middle Eastern background” to the incident. The next day, *The New York Times* noted, “Some Middle Eastern groups have held meetings there [in Oklahoma], and the city is home to at least three mosques.”

A CAIR report issued in September 1995 documents 222 incidents targeting community members as a result of [those unfounded reports](#). These included three shootings, a fake bomb thrown into a Muslim children’s playground, and a Muslim woman who “miscarried her near-term baby after an April 20th attack on her home in Oklahoma City.”

Two white men were eventually caught and convicted of various charges relating to the 1995 terror attack.

In 2025, the Government Accountability Office repeated a longstanding factual reality that “racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism” is [one of the most lethal domestic terrorism threats to the United States](#). In late 2025, two experts with the University of Dayton, citing multiple data sets, wrote that “right-wing extremist violence has been responsible for the overwhelming majority of fatalities, amounting to [approximately 75% to 80% of U.S. domestic terrorism deaths since 2001](#).”

Drummond’s flawed logic suggests he should be opening investigations into white men who are right-wing. Such profiling would, of course, be just as much a waste of Oklahoma resources as religious profiling.

Evidence of wrongdoing should drive investigations, not public sentiment or unfounded allegations.

## Conclusion

CAIR believes that protecting the rights to be different and to dissent is not a favor to any one community. It is the operating system of a free country.

This report details a multi-front effort to push Oklahoma Muslims outside the circle of the state’s protected civic and religious life — through legislation, through zoning, and through the investigative power of the state.

Every element of this effort has been tried before.

The 10th Circuit said in 2012 what the Constitution has always said: you cannot single out one faith for government disfavor. No faith group can impose its beliefs on the American people. No branch of the government can prevent the American people from practicing their various faiths.

The Constitution has not changed. What has changed is that some public officials now believe the political climate gives them permission to try again.

They are wrong. Neither time nor public disfavor of a minority faith erase the Constitution.

Oklahoma’s Muslims have been part of serving the state for decades.

They are, as evidenced by the contributions described above, exactly what their opponents claim to be defending: Oklahomans.

---

<sup>i</sup> Keating’s letter is reproduced in CAIR’s 1995 report “A Rush to Judgement” (pg. 36). The report can be found online at: <https://islamophobia.org/civil-rights-reports/a-rush-to-judgement/>

<sup>ii</sup> Mek has reportedly [encouraged her followers to follow a man who "openly praises Adolf Hitler and denies the Holocaust happened."](#)