

# THE RISE OF AMERICAN MUSLIM CHANGEMAKERS: Political Organizing in the Trump Era



# AUTHORS

This report is possible as a result of a collaborative effort among Jetpac, CAIR, and MPower Change.



CAIR is the nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, with over 34 offices across the country. Its mission is to enhance understanding of Islam, protect civil rights, promote justice, and empower American Muslims. The Department of Research and Advocacy provides up-to-date research on anti-Muslim bigotry, the impact of Islamophobia on American politics and culture, and American Muslim civil society in various sectors.



Jetpac (Justice Education Technology Political Advocacy Center) is a training and educational organization that seeks to build a strong American Muslim political infrastructure and increase the community's influence and engagement. It trains professionals on grassroots mobilization, civic advocacy, and community organizing, and educates American Muslim youth on civics and leadership.



MPOWER Change is one of the largest Muslim-led social and racial justice organizations in the United States. Rooted in the Islamic faith and the Prophetic model, it believes in building a more just world for all people. Using digital organizing and faith-rooted community organizing, it is building a grassroots movement made up of diverse Muslim and ally communities throughout the United States.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

This report provides qualitative and quantitative analysis of the rise of the American Muslim political class in the Trump era. It does so by profiling American Muslim candidates that ran for public office between 2016 and 2018 and offering insight from Muslim civic engagement organizations on effective methods of grassroots organizing.

It also provides results from CAIR and Jetpac polls and databases documenting American Muslim political engagement and attitudes in the current political moment. This report allows community organizers and political strategists to reflect and discuss the various tactics and approaches used by American Muslim candidates at the local, state, and national levels as they begin to prepare for the 2020 presidential and congressional elections.

## KEY FINDINGS **More Mobilization, Less Persuasion**

- Campaigns that focused on providing political access for traditionally marginalized populations resulted in a significant rise in voter turnout.
- This newly activated political base translated into direct political support in the form of votes, finance, or in-kind contributions.

### **Uphill Battle**

- Most political candidates were grassroots oriented, non-institutional, and often faced opposition from established political actors.
- This lack of institutional support required intense and early ground-level organizing.
- Engaging and activating new political bases required more financial and human resources than expected.
- Candidates consistently reported that mosque-based communities and traditional Muslim institutions did not play an early or significant role in mobilizing campaign resources.

### **Message Discipline, Narrative Control**

- Candidates that made organic use of social media, digital storytelling, and video production were able to mobilize voters at community and national levels in greater degrees than those who did not.
- Candidates reported that a strong multi-platform social media presence with consistent message discipline helped control media narratives about candidates and mitigate potentially negative coverage.

### **Muslim, American, Human**

- Although most American Muslim candidates reported that Trump-era Islamophobia motivated them to enter formal politics, they stated that their faith motivated their agenda, but did not define or limit it.
- Most candidates reported that their faith values guided their social justice orientation by prioritizing human welfare and social equity.

# METHODS

The data presented in this report was gathered through a collaboration between CAIR, Jetpac and MPower Change, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. In addition to distilling insights from conversations and interviews with candidates and stakeholders in the American Muslim political organizing space, this report presents information on Muslim voter attitudes in 2018 and provides a current list of American Muslims elected to office between 2016 and 2018.

Data on American Muslim voter attitudes came from CAIR's 2018 midterm election exit poll survey. The survey sampled 1,027 respondents to ask questions on basic demographic indicators, perception of personal political ideology, social values, and religiosity, political and civic engagement and voting behavior, and the perception of Islamophobia. Data on American Muslim candidates and campaigns is a product of an ongoing joint effort between Jetpac and CAIR that documents American Muslim political organizing capacity. This information is gathered through an automated survey of media sources, as well as through outreach to CAIR and Jetpac professional networks and donor bases. Surveying anti-Muslim and Islamophobic blogs and websites that attack American Muslim candidates proved to be a supplemental, if ironic, source of information. For fundraising data, CAIR and Jetpac used Ballotpedia and the Federal Election Commission and State finance data sources to acquire information on fundraising efforts and the districts' history.

# AMERICAN MUSLIM CHANGEMAKERS:

A GRASSROOTS STORY

ABDUL EL SAYED  
Michigan



*(Photo courtesy of Facebook/Abdul El-Sayed for Governor)*

“Yes, I’m 33 years old. Yes, I’m Egyptian-American. Yes, I’m Muslim. We past that? Great. Now let’s start talking about solutions to problems Michiganders face.”

## UNAPOLOGETIC

Unapologetic—if there was one word that could sum up the spirit and posture of the new American Muslim political class, that would be it. In the face of relentless attacks on their faith, heritage, and political orientation, the rising political actors from various Muslim backgrounds are proactive and bold about their identity. They are empowered citizens ready to serve their constituents on issues that affect all Americans and do not shy away about their faith in a political atmosphere that attacks them for simply being Muslim.

This new political class is aggressively non-institutional and represents a broader trend in American politics of an engaged political insurgency. Like many Americans, they have grown suspicious of the status quo in partisan politics and of corporate interests’ influence on policy-making. Prioritizing people before profit, their campaigns have been staunchly rooted in grassroots organizing, strategizing, and fundraising. As the profiles in this report show, these candidates’ policy priorities are



grounded in local interests. Issues such as fair wages, affordable and accessible healthcare, and equitable housing top their strategic priorities.

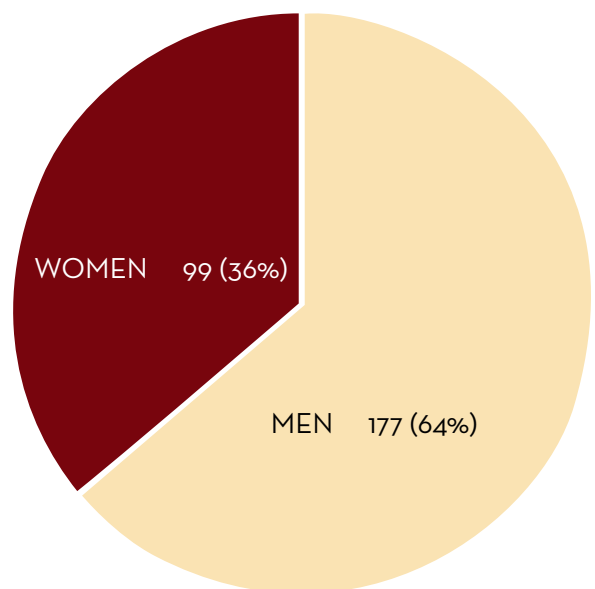
Drawing support from a range of community-based networks and organizations, the candidates profiled in this report demonstrate that building deliberate and meaningful coalitions can challenge even the most entrenched political forces. In this way, American Muslim political actors are largely aligned with progressive leftist voices in the current political spectrum. Like their non-Muslim counterparts in this space, they envision an American political future that serves the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized communities in the country.

While Islamophobia has been a distinct feature of American culture for decades, it has also become an alarmingly mainstream component of contemporary politics. In fact, research shows that anti-Muslim rhetoric, hate crimes, and bias incidents tend to spike around election cycles. The rise of anti-Muslim bigotry as a political phenomenon can be traced to 2010 when a manufactured controversy surrounding the construction of a mosque near the former World Trade Center took center stage in the national conversation. The Park51 Mosque, led by progressive Imam and interfaith icon Feisal Abdul Rauf, was attacked by anti-Muslim activists. Propagandists such as Pamela Geller, who would normally be considered fringe actors in the media and political space, were catapulted to national attention as the GOP adopted their misinformation agenda as a way to galvanize its base during a critical election cycle.

Islamophobia has since become a firm anchor in the Republican Party's strategic narrative and has crystallized during the Trump era. Given this reality, one would think that addressing anti-Muslim activity in the political system would be the top priority for the new class of American Muslim political change makers. However, as this report demonstrates, the political priorities of American Muslim candidates and elected officials is less about Muslim identity and more about ensuring that American political culture serves everyone, equally and equitably. Rather than retreating from an uninviting political arena or acquiescing to the rampant cynicism that defines much of the average citizen's attitude to formal politics, these political actors have jumped directly into the combative public arena, exemplifying that principled and purposeful civic engagement is the only way to repair what so many see as a flawed and failing system.

## AMERICAN MUSLIMS WHO RAN FOR PUBLIC OFFICE BETWEEN 2016-2018

**TOTAL PEOPLE ELECTED TO OFFICE 131**



**TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO RAN FOR OFFICE 276**

It should be remembered, however, that American Muslims operating as a powerful political class is not a new phenomenon. In addition to immigrants and first-generation Americans engaging the political space, the African-American Muslim community—which some estimate constitutes 20 percent of the overall Muslim population in the country—exemplifies grassroots civic engagement and political empowerment.<sup>1</sup> With roots stretching to the antebellum South, where many enslaved Africans came from Muslim societies, contemporary African-American Muslim communities have flourished as pioneering social service providers and social justice advocates. Leaders such as Cleveland City Councilman Basheer Jones and Massachusetts attorney Tahirah Amatul-Wadud, both profiled in this report, have carried the legacy of Black American Muslim contributions to the formal political arena. They have laid the groundwork and set the precedent for their co-religionists to be grassroots-oriented, service-committed, and unapologetically Muslim.

As various forces within the American Muslim experience converge in the formal political arena, onlookers can expect to witness a few salient themes. First, most American Muslim candidates affiliate with the Democratic Party, whether of the liberal or progressive wings, while approximately 20 percent of American Muslim voters identify as independent.<sup>2</sup> Given the aforementioned attitude toward Muslims by the Republican Party, and the pre-2004 historical alignment of large bodies of the Muslim electorate with the GOP, a move to independent status among American Muslim voters is not surprising.

The second key characteristic of the American Muslim political class is its coalitional and intersectional grounding. That is, rather than running on platforms that seek to redress concerns that exclusively affect their community, Muslim candidates can be expected to align their interests with those of other ethnic and religious minorities who seek greater access to centers of decision making power. As former Cambridge City Councilor Nadeem Mazen put it, “This stuff is not Muslim stuff.. It’s American stuff.” In this context, it is not uncommon to see American Muslims supporting a range of social and political causes, such as full support of LGBTQ rights and the decriminalization of marijuana, that would typically be assumed to be at odds with their religious commitments.

A third dimension of the American Muslim political class that onlookers need to take into consideration is its local and decentralized, yet highly networked organizing capacity. American Muslims represent one of the most economically and ethnically diverse religious communities in the country, whose members overlap in multiple ways with various constituencies.<sup>3</sup> For example, African-American Muslims play a critical role in local politics throughout the country’s urban centers, and are also connected to the growing web of ethnically Arab and South Asian stakeholders who are spread across the socio-political spectrum. The communication and organizing capacity of this radically decentralized but highly networked set of actors has the potential to draw human, political, and financial assets from an array of sources. Although systematic research on the American Muslim political class is still in its infancy, recent studies show that these trends indeed are well established and paint a reliable picture of the near future.

CAIR and Jetpac research demonstrates that Trump-era Islamophobia has propelled a rise in American Muslim political organization. According to their findings, a total of 276 candidates ran for elected office between 2016 and 2018 at various levels of government despite the overwhelming anti-Muslim narrative in the public sphere. Of this total, 99 candidates, or a full 36 percent, were female, proving once more that gender-based stereotypes that diminish the role of American Muslim women in community life are more myth than reality. The overwhelming majority (230) of these campaigns were run at the local, county, or state legislative levels, showing that American Muslim candidates are firmly embedded in their communities

and attuned to their political needs. Naturally, areas that have the largest Muslim populations also produced the largest number of candidates with California, New Jersey, Minnesota, and Michigan producing more than half (162) of the country's American Muslim candidates. The overall financial contribution of American Muslims in the political space demands further research. However, our preliminary findings suggest that between 2016 and 2018 American Muslim Congressional candidates raised \$16.2 million, and state level candidates raised \$3.6 million. For a full list of candidates that ran for office, please see Appendix I.

The rising American Muslim political class is supported by a broad and deep voter base with nuanced political views and religious attitudes. According to CAIR's recent report, "Candidates and Constituents," which provided the results of a phone-based exit survey conducted on the night of the 2018 midterm elections, 78 percent of American Muslim voters voted for Democratic candidates. However, 35 percent of respondents also noted that they consider themselves socially conservative, while 43 percent considered themselves fiscally conservative. This breadth of political perspective and voting behavior demonstrates that American Muslims are not a single-issue voting class, but rather that they operate with versatility in a constantly shifting political environment.

As the candidates profiled in this report indicate, broad-based voter mobilization played a key role in activating their campaigns. Consistent with this qualitative insight, the data gathered by the CAIR exit poll reports that 55 percent of respondents became more active in politics and civic engagement since the 2016 election. This finding further demonstrates that American Muslims have responded to the country's Islamophobic political climate through active political engagement and substantive social service. A significant finding of the poll, however, also indicates that the American Muslim community's political engagement is not dependent or significantly related to mosque attendance or involvement: 41 percent of respondents indicated that they were "very" or "somewhat involved" in their local mosque or Islamic center, and 54.7 percent reported that they were "not very involved" or "not at all involved." American Muslim engagement, therefore, can be presumed to span across religious, class, and cultural lines.

The following pages introduce readers to a small pool of American Muslim candidates who ran campaigns at local, state, and national levels of office. Through these profiles, readers will gain a sense of the political mobilization strategies, messaging tactics, and financial planning the candidates pursued as they entered electoral politics. The report also provides readers with insight into the ways CAIR, Jetpac, and MPower Change operate at the grassroots and digital levels to mobilize for political change. Taken together, the contents of this report allow readers to understand and reflect upon the rise of the American Muslim political class in the Islamophobic age of the Trump administration. Most importantly, it provides a working blueprint for those interested in impacting the march to the 2020 presidential elections.

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<sup>1</sup> "Demographic Portrait of Muslim Americans." Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project. July 26, 2017. <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/demographic-portrait-of-muslim-americans/>.

<sup>2</sup> "American Muslims' Political and Social Views." Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project. July 26, 2017. <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/political-and-social-views/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Demographic Portrait of Muslim Americans." Pew Research Center

## BASHEER JONES OHIO

We asked Councilman Basheer Jones to reflect on how the following words related to his campaign and values.

### FAITH IN POLITICS

Necessary. My faith is what guides me in politics. Being Muslim, our spiritual standard is what I always go back to. And to be quite honest with you, I'm always nervous in this position. I don't want to let people down— my community, the Muslims. I'm going to do my best and strive to be my best. Islam is what guides me to do the work that I do, I don't need to wear it on my sleeve, but I make it clear. This just part of my tradition, the legacy of African-American Muslims in this country: Imam Warith Deen Muhammad to Malcolm and the Muslims that came before..

### HIS BIGGEST CHALLENGE

The biggest challenge I encountered was the opposition I met from the people you're trying to help the most. That's really the most unexpected thing. I mean, "I'm trying to be of assistance to you, so why are you positioning yourself as an enemy!?" People are complacent and content, even in darkness. So people will resist even when you try to bring light to a situation. So, I just pray that Allah blesses us all to increase in our growth and willingness to grow.

### HIS BIGGEST REWARD

Alhamdulillah [praise God]. When we hit that Takbeer [God is Great] [at the City Council], the messages we got from around the country, from around the world!

*Continued on page 14*

# AMERICAN MUSLIMS

AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

From Bosnia, Nigeria, Iraq, Chicago, Ghana, Somalia! All across the globe, Muslims and people of faith were just proud that we called on God and made it clear that God is the Greatest. And of course to feed the people! For people to see us do what we said we are going to do and fulfill our promises. To increase their hope that there actually are people who say what they mean and mean what they say.

### NEXT STEPS

Alhamdulillah. Either I run for higher office or move to Africa! [laughter] I'm trying to figure out what I'm supposed to do. I would love one day to take this message to a national stage, even international. But that also kind of scares me because I don't know if I'm ready for that. More light brings more exposure and I just pray that I'm prepared. I'm enjoying the present and walking wherever Allah takes me. I know He won't take me anywhere where I would get destroyed.

## AMERICAN MUSLIMS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The addition of Rashida Tlaib from Michigan and Ilhan Omar from Minnesota to U.S. Congress represents a new era in American Muslim federal electoral politics and representation. Not only are these trailblazers the first Muslim women elected to Congress, but their campaigns have also been thoroughly rooted in their communities and have advanced a progressive platform.

This section examines how national level American Muslim candidates have built their progressive, broad-based, grassroots campaigns. It is clear that the candidates' bases of support have been rooted in the different communities they identify with and serve through direct action. Profiled individuals include those who have run for their position for the first time, namely Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar, Tahirah Amatul-Wadud, and Deedra Abboud.

Candidates who engage wider civil society organizations and who have built up years of lower-level political organizing possess a serious competitive edge against other candidates. They are able to leverage their networks to build a quicker and larger base of popular and financial support across their state and the nation. This is especially the case when the candidates drive their message through deep engagement on social media platforms, which allows them to tap into pools of support outside of their immediate political environment.

In outlining the campaign strategies of the candidates at a national level, the relationship of the individual, the political, and religious identity is also interrogated. Many candidates have found themselves on the national stage challenging the low expectations that political commentators, outsiders, and even fellow Muslim community members placed upon them as rising Muslim candidates.

*Courtesy of Omar Al Saray*



A photograph of Rashida Tlaib, a woman with dark hair and glasses, wearing a grey cardigan, smiling with her arms crossed. In the background is the Michigan State Capitol building with its prominent dome.

RASHIDA TLAIB  
Michigan

“I will fight back against every racist and oppressive structure that needs to be dismantled,” announced Rashida Tlaib to the 3 a.m. crowd of supporters that stuck around until the last votes were counted in the Michigan 13th District Democratic Primary and the Detroit native’s victory was made final. “You deserve better.”<sup>4</sup>

On November 6, the 42-year-old daughter of Palestinian immigrants, oldest of 14 children, mother of two, and first in her family to go to college, went on to win the uncontested general election and become one of the first Muslim women elected to U.S. Congress. The district is one of the poorest in the country – less than half of residents are homeowners.

Tlaib started her political career in 2004 by interning and then working for Michigan State Representative and Majority Floor Leader Steve Tobocman. In 2008, she ran for and won Tobocman’s seat after he stepped down due to term limits. Having served her community and constituents for six years as a Representative in the Michigan Legislature from 2008 to 2014, Tlaib decided to run for Congress after witnessing the increasing attacks against American Muslims and immigrants following Donald Trump’s election.

“I ran because of injustices and because of my boys, who are question-

ing their [Muslim] identity and whether they belong. I've never been one to stand on the sidelines," Tlaib said.<sup>5</sup>

Prior to her primary victory, Politico called Tlaib "the left's way forward."<sup>6</sup> She is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America and while campaigning for Congress was endorsed by the Greater Detroit Democratic Socialists of America, People for Bernie, and Justice Democrats.

As a Congressional Representative, Tlaib plans to advance a progressive policy agenda that includes Medicare for all, a \$15 minimum wage, investment in local public schools, access to public colleges, environmental protections, and the restoration of the Voting Rights Act. Additionally, at a local level she intends to continue her direct impact work and operate a local Neighborhood Service Center to address the basic needs of her constituents.

In addressing supporters on how she negotiated her own identity and personal brand, Tlaib said, "I want people across the country to know that you don't need to sell out. You don't have to change who you are to run for office—and that is what this country is about."<sup>7</sup>

"Even though people still may not understand my faith, I expose it in such an impactful way through public service," Tlaib told The Detroit News, "People still cannot pronounce my name, but they remember the things that I do for them."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Herndon, Astead W. "Rashida Tlaib, With Primary Win, Is Poised to Become First Muslim Woman in Congress." The New York Times. August 08, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/08/us/politics/rashida-tlaib-congress-muslim.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Venkataramanan, Meena. "Muslim-American Women Hope to Make History in Midterm Elections." ABC News. August 05, 2018. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/muslim-american-women-hope-make-history-midterm-elections/story?id=56988133>.

<sup>6</sup> Robertson, Derek. "Rashida Tlaib Is the Left's Way Forward." POLITICO. August 10, 2018. <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/08/10/rashida-tlaib-michigan-progressive-democrats-219346>.

<sup>7</sup> Herndon, "Rashida Tlaib." The New York Times.

<sup>8</sup> Wright, Louisa. "Michigan's Rashida Tlaib Set to Become First Muslim Woman in Congress." MSN News. August 8, 2018. <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/michigans-rashida-tlaib-set-to-become-first-muslim-woman-in-congress/ar-BBLF7qU>.





*Image Credit: Ilhan Omar for State Representative*

## ENTERING

the U.S. as a refugee at the age of 12 in 1995, Ilhan Omar knew two English phrases: “hello” and “shut up.” Fast forward to 2016 and Omar became the first Somali-American Muslim legislator in the state of Minnesota. Two short years later, she can now claim the same for the United States Congress.

In 2016, Omar unseated a 44-year incumbent to win the Democratic primary in Minnesota’s Fifth Congressional District, which includes Minneapolis and its inner-ring suburbs. It has been her home for the past 20 years and is where she and her husband are raising their three children.

“They know, as kids who are Muslim, Somali, black Americans, that they’ve always been part of a struggle and that change isn’t easy,” she said.<sup>9</sup> This drive to raise her children in a better world is part of what motivated Omar to enter the political arena and fight for change. “I believe women and minorities often wait for permission to be invited to something; we need to stop doing that.”<sup>10</sup>

Omar wants to “expand what is politically possible,” and has constructed a platform that advances, among other things, Medicare for all, tuition and debt-free college, housing as a human right, environmental protection, racial equity, and support for working families.<sup>11</sup> This broad social justice and equity-oriented platform is critical to her identity as an elected representative: she sees herself as fighting on behalf of all of her constituents, not just Somali-Americans. “I am not a Somali representative. I am not a Muslim representative,” Omar says. “I am not a millennial representative. I am not a woman representative. I am a representative who happens to have all of these marginalized identities and can understand the intersectionality of all of them in a very unique way.”<sup>12</sup>

A significant part of her electoral success is due to her activation of the youth and student vote through grassroots and social media engagement. In effect, she simultaneously created a political class and a political base through deep outreach into diverse pools of untapped voters who identified with her vision, mission, and spirit. Omar is largely credited with increasing voter turnout in her 2016 election by an incredible 37 percent.

By building her own base, Omar was also able to control her narrative as it developed in real time. Filmmaker Norah Shapiro followed Omar during her 2016 campaign for the Minnesota State House of Representatives, producing an award-winning documentary along the way: “Time for Ilhan.” This film and the national press coverage of Omar’s historic 2016 campaign set the stage for her bid to fill outgoing Congressman Keith Ellison’s seat in the 2018 midterm elections. Although the seat has been a Democratic stronghold since the 1960s, the nationwide political implications of the campaign demanded a higher level of political support and endorsements from formal political organizations. Omar quickly received such support from a range of progressive and Democratic groups, including the Sierra Club, the Teamsters, and the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (the state chapter of the Democratic Party).

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<sup>9</sup> Nelson, Jeff. “Meet Ilhan Omar, the First Somali-American US Legislator: My Win ‘Offers a Counter-Narrative to the Bigotry in the World’.” *People*. January 2, 2017.

<https://people.com/politics/ilhan-omar-first-somali-american-legislator-counter-narrative-to-bigotry/>.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Witt, Emily. “How Ilhan Omar Won Over Hearts in Minnesota’s Fifth.” *The New Yorker*. August 15, 2018. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/how-ilhan-omar-won-over-hearts-in-minnesotas-fifth>.

<sup>12</sup> Herrera, Allison, and Peter Majerle. “‘In Love with Democracy,’ Ilhan Omar Draws Diverse Supporters in Bid for Congress.” *Public Radio International*. November 1, 2018. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2018-11-01/love-democracy-ilhan-omar-draws-diverse-supporters-bid-congress>.



*Courtesy of Boston Herald*

As a Black Muslim woman, Tahirah Amatul-Wadud made waves when she announced that she would challenge 29-year incumbent Richard Neal for Representative of Massachusetts' First District in the 2018 Democratic primary.

Rather than let her identity dominate the narrative, however, Amatul-Wadud used the media coverage it generated as an opportunity to talk about what she really cares about: the issues affecting the community she calls home. She frequently gave media interviews while touring the facilities of local nonprofits as a way of amplifying their

work and refused corporate donations.

Amatul-Wadud campaigned to demonstrate that she was a true representative of the people—both accountable and accessible to them. She traveled across her district, attending hundreds of events including rallies, party caucuses, and a women's march, and directly engaged with constituents on social media. Her platform reflected her desire to uplift her community and included Medicare for all, reliable internet access, and a livable minimum wage.

While thousands rallied behind Amatul-Wadud, her cam-

paign was attacked by anti-Muslim activists. A series of hateful Islamophobic propaganda mailers accused her of being a secret agent and attempting to “implement Sharia law” in America. She was also attacked for voting for a Republican candidate for Senate in 2012, which she called “the biggest drama” of the campaign. Her response? “Own it. Be real.”

Despite losing, she remained positive about the impact of her campaign, writing, “We cannot deny that being a part of democracy is a healing for indifference and hopelessness... We made history and continue to attract national attention which shines the light on us and our needs.”<sup>13</sup>

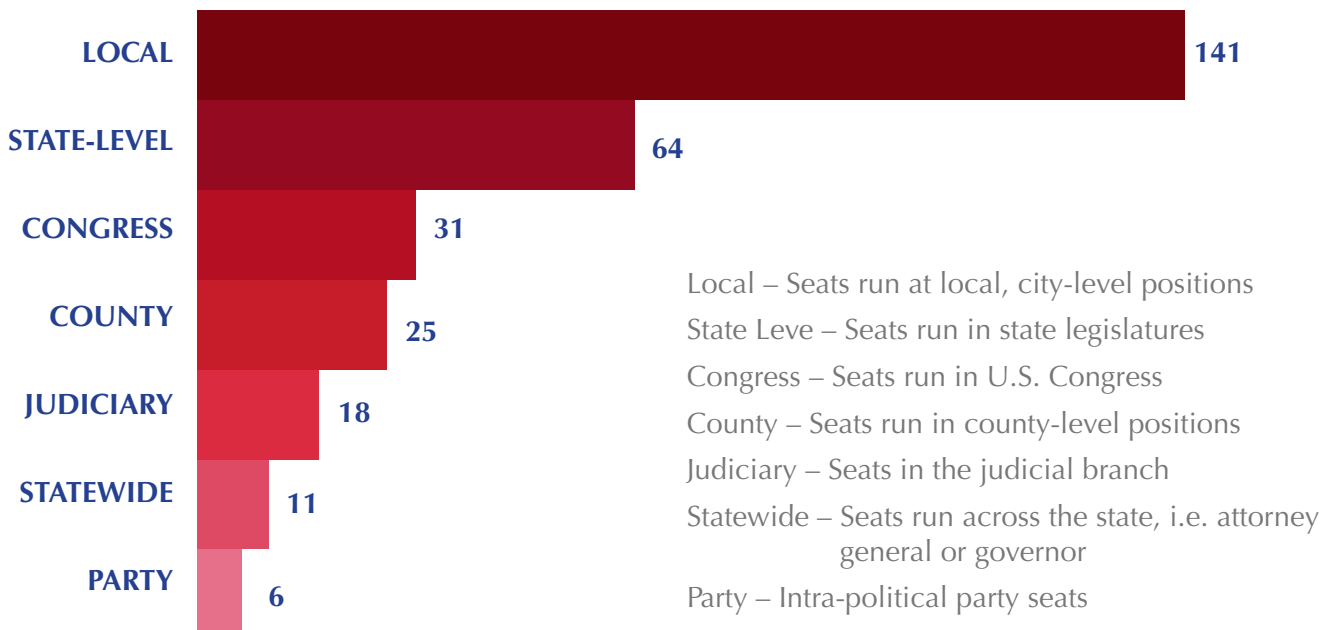
Sitting in her law office two months after the election, Tahirah Amatul-Wadud had a message for Muslims thinking about running for office: “They absolutely must be engaged in the community from a broad sense and on larger issues, not just issues of Islam.” She continued, “People are going to see you however they decide, but regardless of how people see you, you have to have more depth to your experience than that.”

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<sup>13</sup> Amatul-Wadud, Tahirha. “Tahirah for Congress,” Campaign Website, <https://tahirahforcongress.com/>.

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## LEVELS OF OFFICE CAMPAIGNED FOR



*“The journey that I have decided to take on today is not just for the people who look like me or sound like me, but for all Arizona,”*

Deedra Abboud declared as she announced her candidacy for U.S. Senate.



“The journey that I have decided to take on today is not just for the people who look like me or sound like me, but for all Arizona,” Deedra Abboud declared as she announced her candidacy for U.S. Senate.

The Little Rock native said she decided to run after witnessing the rhetoric of the 2016 presidential campaign. “When I saw families, friends, and neighbors being torn apart by the verbal attacks... I needed to be part of the movement to unite our communities and move us forward with the American values that have always made us the most inspiring country in the world.”

Prior to her Senate bid, Abboud worked for 15 years as a civil rights and social justice activist in Arizona. In 2003, Abboud helped start the Arizona chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the nation’s largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

Abboud campaigned statewide and made it a point to meet with rural voters who are regularly ignored by traditional state campaigns. She gained support from the broader community before the Arizona Muslim community eventually supported her campaign.

Her messaging strategy rested on one-on-one interactions and social media broadcasting for her campaign events using the hashtag #DeedraIsEverywhere. Her policy platform included raising the minimum wage to \$15, providing healthcare for all, legalizing marijuana at the federal level, reforming student loans, and providing tuition-free community college.

Abboud’s campaign intentionally did not accept corporate or PAC donations or endorsements, instead asking supporters to individually donate or volunteer. She raised a little over \$100,000 and received 104,000 votes in the state primary, averaging 20 percent of the vote in each county.

Though she did not reach the general election, Abboud says that campaigning was the “best experience I have ever had.” Going into rural Arizona was a phenomenal interfaith experience for her. Abboud advises future American Muslim candidates to “have thick skin” and “figure out everything [your opponents] will throw at you and use it to your advantage.”



# AMERICAN MUSLIMS

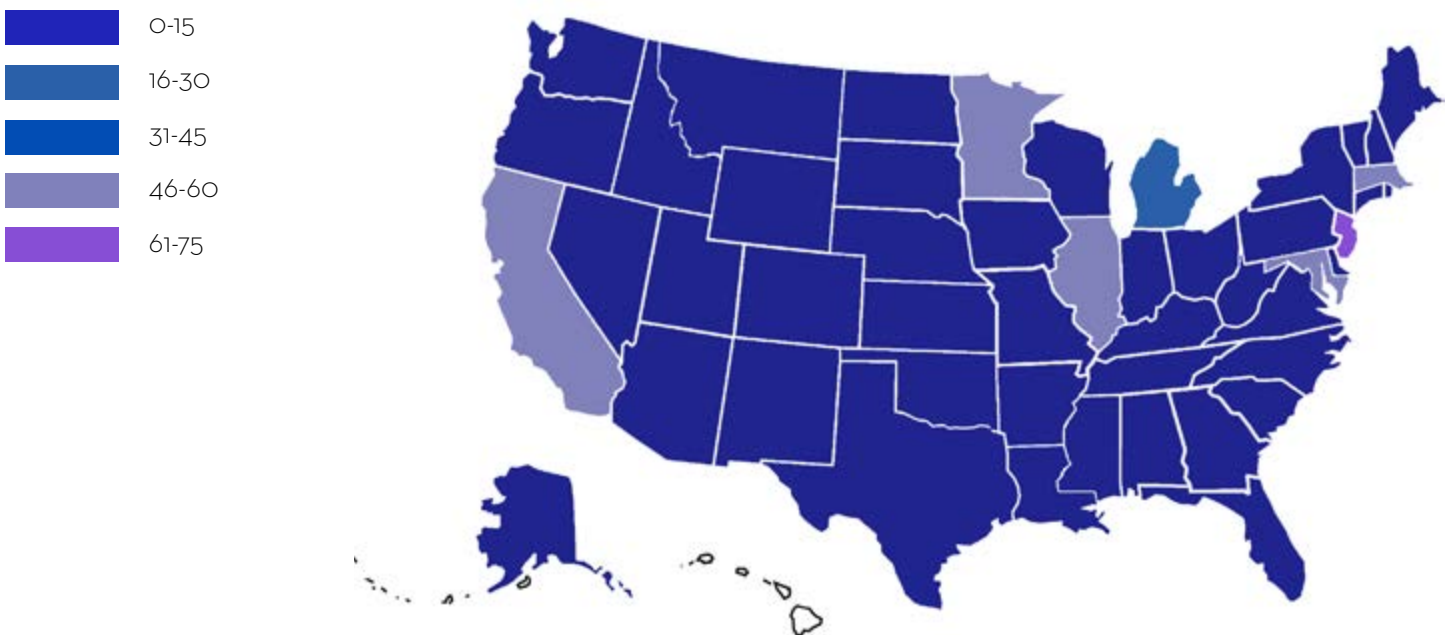
IN LOCAL AND STATE POLITICS

Every election, community organizers repeat the adage that candidates running for office want three things: votes, volunteers, and money. Candidates running for office, however, will not acquire any of these unless they can quickly define to potential supporters another set of three: who they are, what they want to accomplish, and what they oppose.

This section looks at local and state-level candidates and highlights their campaign strategies for success. It explores the backgrounds that define these candidates and how this informs their policy objectives. Each profile briefly shares the candidate's personal journey from concerned citizens, to community activist and advocate, to candidate. Individuals profiled include Basheer Jones, Ahmad Zahra, Aisha Yaqoob, and Abdul El-Sayed.

In outlining the campaign strategies of the candidates at the local and state level, the relationship of the individual, the political, and religious identity is also interrogated. Like their federal counterparts, many candidates have found themselves challenging the expectations of political commentators, outsiders, and even fellow Muslim community members.

## THE GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF AMERICAN MUSLIM CANDIDATES





## Q&A

### We asked Abdul El-Sayed what came to mind when he heard the following words and how they related to his campaign and values.

#### THE ROLE OF FAITH

Critical. For me, it reminds me why I want to serve humanity. It is also a reminder that the beauty of the belief in God is that the result is in His control. This provides a tremendous amount of peace in what can otherwise be a very turbulent experience. Also, the fundamentals of our faith are really about character. Being a great politician is hopefully about having great character. Now, unfortunately, that's not often the case, but I always go back to that. My goal is to reflect my belief and faith in my character.

#### HIS BIGGEST CHALLENGE

Constant rejection. That's from people you know and people you don't. People often treat politicians like a commodity rather than as a person. People can be really mean and you have to be able to take it with a grain of salt and not respond to it. That's the hard part of running for office, you're putting yourself up for judgement. You're going to get rejected all the time and you have to be ok with that.

#### HIS BIGGEST REWARD

Watching young people who, for whatever reason—because of their faith, skin color, where they grew up, their family's wealth—have been told implicitly that they can't do a certain thing, then witnessing some-

one else, like them, do it—and do it well. Seeing their faces light up and watch them start to see themselves in new ways, I think, is the most rewarding thing about this. It's like the 11-year old who wants nothing to do with you in the beginning when his parents are hosting you, by the end of the night coming up to you with his piggy bank and giving it to his parents to donate to your campaign.

#### NEXT STEPS

For me, the work hasn't changed. I didn't go away because I lost my primary. It's about the work, not the election. It's not about the position. I intend to be fighting for my values and leading for a more just, more equitable, more sustainable America, inshaAllah, for the rest of my career. Hopefully for the rest of my life. I do intend to run again. I don't know for what office or when, but I'll keep leading in that direction. Life is short, long, and extremely unpredictable, so I would not presume the arrogance to know exactly what is going to happen in the future.

*“I wanna say something that probably has never been said in here before,”*

Basheer Jones told his audience. It was his swearing in ceremony in the Cleveland City Council chambers to become the first Muslim councilman in the city’s history.

BASHEER JONES

“TAKBEEER! TAKBEEER! TAKBEEER!”

Jones began a career in community organizing and grassroots activism relating to issues of social justice after his graduation from Georgia’s Morehouse College. He created the “Be the Change” leadership series, which holds leadership and character development workshops within various school systems throughout the state of Ohio.

After participating in and bringing national attention to a 72-hour camp-out in one of Cleveland’s most dangerous neighborhoods to protest the city’s gun violence epidemic, problems with food access, equitable housing and environmental racism, Jones launched and won his political campaign to represent Ward 7 on the Cleveland City Council. Jones’ campout campaign is representative of his larger political strategy, even as he eschews the idea that politics is separate from day-to-day life. When asked about how he planned to launch his campaign, he said simply that “I’m with the people. They see me on the basketball court, in their schools, helping, serving; so if you are against me, you’re out of step with the community.”

While one can argue that all politics is local and needs grassroots organizing, Jones’ movement should be characterized as hyper-local and entirely grounded in the neighborhood he lives in. He and his campaign knew that they would not enjoy the support of the Democratic Party and traditional political groups. They instead

secured their campaign in intense ground-level fundraising and political organizing. Jones’ ruffled feathers with the DNC when he sought, and received, support from Congresswoman Marcia Fudge to defeat the incumbent Democratic city councilman-- an endorsement he claims was made possible by his organic connection to city residents. Jones’s media strategy followed a similar course. By having a powerful presence on social media, his campaign argues that he was able to control his own narrative and thereby set the agenda for the way the media covered him.

Unfortunately, when asked about support from the local Muslim community he says, “The Muslims are asleep. They’re on the menu and will stay there until they get a seat at the table.” He reports that he received far less financial support in 2017 than he did in his first campaign from Muslim donors. He notes, however, that his inner-circle of advisors and volunteers are drawn from his faith-based networks.

Although he is the only Muslim on the City Council, Jones does not shy away from talking about his faith. “The Creator is always in control. And despite what our plans are, He is the best of planners,” Jones said. “And the fact is that he chose us for a great mission.” He says, “We’re just giving dawa [spreading the message] through service.”





## AHMAD ZAHRA California

story, and the solutions he sought to provide.

A former delegate in the local Democratic party, Zahra planted his roots within the local political space well before announcing his election campaign in late 2017. He strategically announced his candidacy before the convention in order to build up both sufficient funding and a political base. By the time the election rolled around, Zahra's campaign had raised over \$60,000 and more than 90 percent of those donations were under \$100.

From the start, Zahra frequented local non-profit community events, knocked on doors every single day for months, and mailed thousands of fliers within his district. He did not, however, reach out to or gain the support of the Muslim community, in part due to limited time and resources.

The central question that came up through his campaign was, "How can an openly gay, Muslim, Arab, Syrian immigrant win in a Latino district?" said Zahra. And he realized that the key was through honest communication and connection with constituents. His strategy was to convey that "I've experienced the same thing as you," he said, and to put forward "solutions to the struggles that we all face."

When asked what advice he would give to American Muslims running for office, Zahra said, "Know who you are and work with what you have. Oh, and raise a ton of money."

"Politics isn't my favorite thing in the world," Ahmad Zahra said, but for him, winning the District 5 seat in Fullerton City Council was necessary to bring about the change he seeks in his hometown.

After earning his M.D. from both Syria and England at the young age of 23, Zahra left it behind to come to America and pursue his true passion: film. Now, the successful small business owner seeks to bring financial stability to his city, revitalize the local economy, and invest in neighborhoods, resident services, and infrastructure. Though he happens to be Muslim, Zahra prefers to focus on his plans for Fullerton, rather than center his religious identity.

"I was told by many that I can't win an election in Fullerton because of my name," Zahra said. That motivated him, in part, to develop a campaign strategy that branded his name and pushed it across social media platforms. Zahra relied heavily on social media to share his message, his



## When 27-year-old Aisha

Yaqoob looked at her elected representatives in the Georgia legislature, she did not see people that looked like her. The American Muslim daughter of Pakistani immigrants decided to change that. On May 22, 2018, Yaqoob won her Democratic primary election with over 70 percent of the vote to become the Party's candidate to represent the 97th District in the Georgia House of Representatives. Traditionally home to Republican voters that had secured the Republican incumbent for over 25 years, the district has witnessed a slow and steady shift in demographics that includes a growing number of Asian and Hispanic residents. The change provided Yaqoob's campaign the opportunity to attempt to turn the state assembly seat blue.

Yaqoob's involvement in the political sphere began young. At the age of 22, in 2015, she founded the Georgia Muslim Voter Project, a non-partisan nonprofit organization that aims to increase voter turnout in the American Muslim community. The project was featured by national news outlets and featured on MTV as an example of growing youth-led grassroots political engagement efforts leading up to the 2016 presidential elections.

Her political organizing experience was also augmented by participating in the Congressional Leadership Development Program offered by the Muslim Public Affairs Council. This connected her to fellow American Muslims launching political

and organizing careers. After earning her Masters of Public Administration and Policy from the University of Georgia in 2016, Yaqoob became the Policy Director at the Atlanta chapter of Asian Americans Advancing Justice. The position introduced her to the legislative process and advocacy at the state capitol and gave her the experience she needed to launch her own campaign.

She believes that the basic lack of political access for immigrant and ethnic communities in her district is what has determined the Republican stronghold on District 97. Therefore, she was sure to provide mailers in multiple languages and attend events with translators for the various specific communities that made up her would-be constituency. This strategy required a considerable amount of financial and human resources. For Yaqoob, the central pillar of her strategy was to translate voter and political access into concrete political support. She notes that the Republican strategy in Georgia, which played in her district, was simply to hope that minority and immigrant communities would stay away from the polls.

By the end of her campaign, Yaqoob raised nearly \$150,000 and earned the endorsements of over a dozen groups, committees, and organizations including Hillary Clinton, Former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, People for the American Way, Emily's List, and Democracy for America. Yaqoob did not win her election but plans on remaining politically engaged and fighting for political access for underrepresented communities.



# \$16.2 million

RAISED BY AMERICAN MUSLIM CANDIDATES FOR CONGRESS BETWEEN 2016-2018



**“My God, the elected leadership in this state is so backward and so broken.”** And with that realization, Abdul El-Sayed, a 33 year-old son of Egyptian immigrants, thought to become the next governor of his home state of Michigan.

## ABDUL EL SAYED

After gaining a medical doctorate from Columbia, a Ph.D from Oxford, and a tenure-track position at Columbia’s School of Public Health, El-Sayed decided that it wasn’t enough to write and research—he wanted to impact direct policy. He left his academic position and became the executive director of the Detroit Health Department in 2015.

When he witnessed a 10-year difference in life expectancy on his drive to work, merely 30 minutes out from the community he grew up in, he felt compelled to do more. It impressed upon him the necessity to move into a position where he could make the biggest positive impact.

This reality, coupled with the hope of building a better future for his child, motivated El-Sayed to run for governor on a platform that embraced Medicare for all, environmental protections, debt-free and tuition-free higher education, and a pathway to 100 percent renewable energy.

El-Sayed’s campaign was built both as a message and movement: “For the people, by the people.” The campaign was centered around meeting the basic needs of average voters in Michigan by changing the status quo in political organizing. The campaign engaged in a statewide listening tour with local community groups and participated in town halls to better understand the way state-level policies impacted constituents from all backgrounds. After gaining enough grassroots support, El-Sayed engaged the formal political institutions and structures of the Democratic Party to seek support for his campaign’s platform.

The El-Sayed campaign planned a multi-tiered financial strategy from the outset that focused on reaching the support of the average, individual donor regardless of the amount contributed. The campaign intentionally eschewed corporate and traditional big-donor sponsorship in order to

align its grassroots message with its operational strategy.

For future American Muslim candidates, El-Sayed advises that the greatest campaign investment is “finding people who share the belief in your vision, but also know things that you do not and can help in ways you didn’t know possible.” He argues that drawing experienced talent to one’s campaign happens naturally if a campaign’s political message is aligned with voter values. “A leader must also be willing to invite constructive and sometimes tough feedback seriously,” he says. “Politics is about leadership and if you want to see how a leader operates, look at them and their family. Your campaign team, constituents and supporters become your professional family.”



AMERICAN MUSLIM  
GRASSROOTS POLITICAL  
ORGANIZING

With the current parity-gap in Muslim representation, grassroots mobilization can serve as an effective way to achieve significant and long-term change for the community. But grassroots movements don't just happen overnight. They require certain key elements to be successful. The campaigns of American Muslims highlighted in this report provide a first-hand look at how those elements can be combined—clarity of objectives, direct engagement with community members of all backgrounds on issues that affect them regardless of faith or identity, and fundraising through small donations without special interest backing.

Any movement must be goal-oriented, but setting achievable, measurable, and specific goals is imperative for grassroots campaigns. This ensures that scarce resources are not expended on a vague or undefined objective that might never come to fruition. Whether a candidate is running for school board or governor, it is critical that the campaign is hyper-aware of the votes it will take to win, the funds needed to reach out to those voters, and the volunteer recruitment efforts necessary to execute on strategies.

Grassroots activists and community advocates must create effective strategies that bridge the gap between goals and action. Such strategies rely on the involvement and collaboration of many individuals to elevate the work of others. A single canvasser can knock 20 doors in an hour, a candidate might make the same number of fundraising calls in that same time, and every person reached should be used as a

springboard to five more potential voters, volunteers, or donors. By prioritizing real connections and using peer-to-peer strategies, grassroots outreach can take on exponential growth.

American Muslim organizers must ask themselves serious questions: Communication is imperative to reach critical mass, so how do we message to a community as diverse as the American Muslim community? Are they also talking to allies? Do they actively message to change the perceptions of those who don't support them? These are crucial questions that must be answered for a grassroots movement to be effective. By emphasizing the needs of people and their communities, American Muslim messaging has the power to reach across identity boundaries without compromising on ideals and values.

In addition to the personal approach, grassroots movements need to take advantage of new media to build credibility and expand their audience. New media, such as social media platforms, are an excellent tool to amplify recruitment, messaging, and fundraising efforts. Fundraising itself is critical to grassroots success: campaigns of all sizes live and die by how much they can raise, and there is an immense amount of money being spent on anti-Muslim organizing. American Muslim candidates in the 2018 cycle have shown that with enough small, individual donations, we can match the fundraising power of special interests.

The execution of all of this, then, hinges on being able to engage as many people who agree with the cause and vision as possible. This means building coalitions on intersectional grounds, ensuring the cause is community-focused, and participating in peer-to-peer outreach, whether it be door-knocking, phone-banking, or through digital media.

In this section, three successful grassroots political organizing campaigns are profiled as case studies on different types of organizing: coalition-based, digital media-focused, and grassroots driven.



# COALITION-BASED, MULTI-LEVEL ADVOCACY: THE ANTI-CVE WIN IN LOS ANGELES

The Los Angeles Muslim community, the fourth largest in the country, is no stranger to government overreach and surveillance. In a well-documented case of federal duplicity, Craig Monteilh—a convicted criminal guilty of fraud and identity theft—was placed by the FBI in an Orange County mosque as an informant intended to root out would-be radicals and terrorist sympathizers. Instead of finding religious extremists, Monteilh was reported to the FBI by the community leadership itself, all while the federal agency was assuring the mosque that it had no intention of ever spying or surveilling the community.<sup>14</sup>

In another case the following year, the Los Angeles Police Department announced a plan to map all Muslim communities in a suspicionless and unconstitutional surveillance program that paralleled the notorious one of the New York Police Department.<sup>15,16</sup> Given this background, when the Obama administration announced its Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) program in 2015 with Los Angeles as a “pilot” city, local Muslim communities worked together with allied organizations to push back against government overreach.

Unveiled in 2011 and housed in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), CVE was the Obama administration’s attempt to take a long-term, systemic approach to counterterrorism that focused on targeting the ideological sources of violence. CVE programs charge community members and civil society organizations with identifying individuals at risk for radicalization and connecting these individuals with programs designed to divert them away from extremism. More dangerously, it asks community groups to identify ideas that might contribute to “radicalization.” Though they sound harmless, CVE programs directly and indirectly task federal law enforcement with collecting information about, and potentially criminalizing, Muslim communities on the baseless notion that their membership might become “radicalized.”

An even more fundamental problem with CVE is that despite years of research, there is no statistical evidence that it contributes to reducing extremism. Instead, CVE programs stigmatize and marginalize the Muslim community by treating all its members as suspects and by holding an entire community responsible for the actions of others. In

securitizing community development efforts, CVE programs create a climate of fear and self-censorship, where people must watch what they say out of fear of being monitored.

Faced with this unwarranted targeting of their community, civil rights organizations like CAIR California, the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California (ACLU), MPower Change, and Asian Americans Advancing Justice banded together to form a multi-pronged challenge to the government’s CVE program in Los Angeles. Broad-based resistance to the L.A. program served as a real-time and unfolding model for advocates nationwide to recognize the threat posed by seemingly innocuous government engagement and surveillance efforts.

Despite strong opposition from an array of community groups, the federal CVE pilot project began with the Muslim Public Affairs Council’s (MPAC) “Safe Spaces” initiative which sought to create community-based dialogue around the problem of religious extremism and provide resources to those dealing with the problem. That project contributed to the identification of L.A. by the DHS as a recipient of a \$425,000 CVE grant under the Trump administration. By this time, the city’s anti-CVE coalition, already activated through various channels and well-coordinated through long-standing relationships, was able to push the city council to eventually reject the federal funding.

CAIR started the campaign to block the CVE funds by mobilizing its supporters and asking community members to call and email the

mayor's office and their councilmembers to oppose the city's acceptance of the funds. People wrote op-eds in major newspapers and the story gained national media attention. At the same time, the ACLU, in coordination with CAIR, pursued litigation against the city of Los Angeles and exposed the program's details to the public through the recovery of sensitive information via FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) requests. On the digital front, MPower Change ran a nationwide petition and publicity campaign against the program, which simultaneously empowered CAIR and other advocacy organizations to make the case about the detrimental nature of CVE before city officials.

What started as a grassroots community organizing effort ended as a national victory for American Muslim civil rights. In August 2018, the city of Los Angeles announced that it turned down \$425,000 in CVE funding from the Trump administration. "American Muslims are not asking for special treatment," said CAIR-LA Executive Director Hussam Ayloush. "We refuse to be treated as second-class citizens in our country and cities. We just want respect and dignity. Is it too much to ask?"

## DIGITAL ADVOCACY: MPOWER CHANGE AND #MYMUSLIMVOTE

The historic victories in the 2018 midterm election would not have been possible without a deep community-organizing infrastructure that targeted traditionally underrepresented communities. The "My Muslim Vote" campaign functioned as a key component of building this infrastructure and awakening the American Muslim voter in what is likely the largest Muslim-focused civic engagement drive in U.S. history.

MPower Change launched the "My Muslim Vote" campaign during the 2016 election. By the time the 2018 midterm elections rolled around, 40 Muslim and ally organizations had come together for the civic engagement project. The campaign was driven as a cross-platform campaign using MPower Change's email list, social media, phone banking, and grassroots events, many of which were held at mosques across 15 states.

MPower Change hosted a national Muslim voter registration day on August 24, 2018, that included 42 events across 15 states and resulted in nearly 1,200 direct voter registrations and pledges. To augment the physical presence with a digital campaign, MPower coordinated four different "Twitter moments" under the hashtags #mymuslimvote and #callingallmuslims. The campaign also included a volunteer-driven phone banking day across twelve states, which hosted 10 phone bank parties, resulting in over 8,000 calls made in one day. In addition, MPower hosted a series of public and private webinars to mobilize the cross-platform campaign. The public webinars were made available on video for viewers to engage with on their own time and reached over 60,000 views.

The success of the "My Muslim Vote" campaign was built atop the organizational infrastructure MPower Change has built since its founding. MPower has quickly grown to become one of the largest Muslim-led social and racial justice organizations in the United States. It combines

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<sup>14</sup> "The Convert." This American Life. August 10, 2012. <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/471/the-convert>.

<sup>15</sup> Winton, Richard, Teresa Watanabe, and Greg Krikorian. "LAPD Defends Muslim Mapping Effort." Los Angeles Times. November 10,

<sup>16</sup> "Factsheet: The NYPD Muslim Surveillance Program." American Civil Liberties Union. <https://www.aclu.org/other/factsheet-nypd-muslim-surveillance-program>.

digital organizing with grassroots, community-based organizing to conduct campaigns with a diverse set of ally organizations across the U.S.

Founded in 2014 by Linda Sarsour, Mark Crain, and Dustin Craun, who collectively brought together more than 40 years of community organizing experience, the intention was to build a grassroots organization rooted in the diverse Muslim communities in the United States. Combining their experiences in faith-based, local, and digital organizing, together they convened a group of leading American Muslim organizers and faith leaders to set the spiritual, political, and organizational vision. Today, MPower Change has developed both a digital organizing team and a field team that leads on the ground organizing in key cities across the U.S.

Like other online activist platforms such as ColorofChange.org, MPower Change directly engages with Muslims and ally communities who are interested in community organizing. The diversity of the organizational leadership, the intersectionality of the campaigns and actions supported by the platform, and the strong focus on Muslim values makes MPower Change a unique voice in the Muslim community willing to take on important social justice issues.

## GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING: JETPAC'S PUBLIC SERVICE FELLOWSHIP

Jetpac's Public Service Fellowship is a unique program that identifies and trains American Muslims to run for political office. Launched in February of 2017 with an open call for Muslims who wanted to run for office, the fellowship received over 100 applicants from 17 different states in a single day. Since then, 32 organizers have graduated from the program and 13 of those have gone on to win public office.

The fellowship, taught by Jetpac co-founders Shaun Kennedy and Nadeem Mazen, focuses on "people-powered politics," and emphasizes grassroots mobilization through peer-to-peer outreach. Where traditional campaigns focus on convincing high-propensity voters (often called "super voters") to vote for their candidate, Jetpac's training teaches candidates to broaden their engagement to a larger portion of voters—knocking on tens of thousands of doors to encourage everyone to vote. In so doing, Jetpac's fellows invariably increase voter turnout and defeat incumbents by bringing more voters to the table.

Sarah Khatib, a 2017 Jetpac fellow who won both a representative town meeting position and a planning board election in Walpole, Mass., is an excellent example of winning an election with first-time voters. Khatib's mid-year local election saw down-ballot voter turnout (voting at lower

levels of office) increase to the highest levels in three decades—this increase in turnout was closely correlated to her 900+ vote margin of victory over her anti-Muslim opponent.

Canvassing and phone-banking—doors and phones—are the primary methods of outreach for any successful grassroots campaign. But in addition to those mainstays, Jetpac's fellows are taught effective ways of engaging potential voters and donors through email and social media. Using targeted and personalized "brute force" outreach, Jetpac's local-level fellows have been able to raise as much as \$2,000 per day in small donations through digital outreach. All of its fellows refuse PAC and corporate donations, and Jetpac teaches fellows how to leverage issues to increase individual contributions to counter the large amount of special interest money that fuels our political status quo. With an increasingly digital-native popu-

lation intent on claiming their electoral power, social media and digital communications are imperative to mobilizing both votes and money at the grassroots level.

News media plays a large role in the perception of American Muslim candidates. Too often, the American Muslim community is targeted by misleading and harmful stories that—regardless of their falsity—are given extensive media coverage. Even when this coverage decries Islamophobia, it often hurts Muslim political campaigns because of the airtime it gives to the Islamophobic attacks. Jetpac teaches fellows how to engage with reporters to ensure fair coverage. Fellows are taught to pivot to the positives of their campaign, rather than focus on identity or get defensive over Islamophobic allegations, and to call out reporters who propagate unsubstantiated and obviously bigoted stories.

American Muslim political influence will be powered by real people in real communities, and Jetpac's Public Service Fellowship provides the training to engage and motivate that community at all levels.

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# THE AMERICAN MUSLIM ROAD TO 2020

If the American Muslim community hopes to continue its steady rise to political empowerment on the road to the 2020 presidential and congressional elections, it would be wise to heed the lessons taught by the candidates and organizations reviewed in this report. Perhaps more than any particular strategy or tactic suggested by American Muslim candidates, their leadership teaches organizers that in the current moment of political cynicism and social discord the characteristics of willpower, honesty, and integrity matter more than ever. The candidates profiled here argue that in the age of inauthenticity and “fake news,” political campaigns must be built on truth and substance and must offer concrete solutions to local problems.

In order to do this, American Muslim organizers must work across and between multiple social and political groups that address the intersectional issues that impact all American citizens and not just their communities. This often requires working on issues that may—on the surface level—appear to be at odds with traditional community norms and values. However, working through broad coalitions to achieve social justice and equity goals will not only benefit Muslim communities but also ensure the right to dignity and respect for other marginalized and targeted groups.

American Muslim political organizations must also work across multiple platforms, utilizing social media, grassroots, and conventional media to mobilize voters in multiple constituencies. To do this effectively, organizations should work in strong institutional partnerships, avoid redundancy and rivalry, and enhance one another's strategic assets through efficient resources sharing mechanisms.

Finally, to be effective in the 2020 elections, American Muslim organizers and potential candidates must be willing to promote and work in deep collaboration with youth-designed and youth-led campaigns. Ultimately, learning how to bridge the gaps in the American Muslim community between generations, religious sensibilities, and ethnic/racial groups will yield the fruits necessary to grow as a mature political class poised to make a difference in 2020.

## AMERICAN MUSLIMS THAT RAN FOR PUBLIC OFFICE BETWEEN 2016-2018

This data is gathered through a survey of media sources, as well as through outreach to CAIR and Jetpac professional networks and donor bases. It is a work in progress and subject to change. To suggest additions, revisions, or adjustments, please contact [info@cair.com](mailto:info@cair.com).

| Full Name             | State | Legislative Body                                     | Level of Office | Election Year(s) |
|-----------------------|-------|--|-----------------|------------------|
| Deedra Abboud         | AZ    | U.S. Senate  | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Johnny Martin         | AZ    | AZ House of Representatives                          | SL              | 2018             |
| Abraham Khan          | CA    | Superior Court of Los Angeles County                 | JUDICIARY       | 2018             |
| Ahmad Zahra           | CA    | Fullerton City Council                               | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Al Jabbar             | CA    | Anaheim Union High School District Board of Trustees | LOCAL           | 2014, 2018       |
| Anila Ali             | CA    | Irvine City Council                                  | LOCAL           | 2016             |
| Asif Mahmood          | CA    | CA Department of Insurance                           | SW              | 2018             |
| Cheryl Sudduth        | CA    | West County Wastewater District Director             | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Farrah Khan           | CA    | Irvine City Council                                  | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Fauzia Siddiqui Rizvi | CA    | Corona City Council                                  | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Fayaz Nawabi          | CA    | San Diego City Council                               | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| George Abdallah Jr.   | CA    | Superior Court of San Joaquin County                 | JUDICIARY       | 2018             |
| Kaisar Ahmed          | CA    | US House of Representatives                          | CONGRESS        | 2016, 2018       |
| Kia Hamadanchy        | CA    | US House of Representatives                          | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Omar Qudrat           | CA    | US House of Representatives                          | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Omar Siddiqui         | CA    | US House of Representatives                          | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Sabuhi Siddique       | CA    | San Jose City Council                                | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Sam Jammal            | CA    | US House of Representatives                          | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Shahid Buttar         | CA    | US House of Representatives                          | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Shamus Sayed          | CA    | US House of Representatives                          | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Ali Sajjad Taj        | CA    | CA State Senate                                      | SL              | 2018             |
| Sabina Zafar          | CA    | San Ramon City Council                               | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Aisha Wahab           | CA    | Hayward City Council                                 | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Maimona Afzal Berta   | CA    | Franklin-McKinley Board of Education                 | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Javed Ellahie         | CA    | Monte Sereno City Council                            | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Halim Dhanidina       | CA    | CA District 2 Court of Appeal                        | JUDICIARY       | 2018             |
| Fahd Syed             | CT    | Waterbury Board of Aldermen                          | LOCAL           | 2017             |

| Full Name              | State | Legislative Body                               | Level of Office | Election Year(s) |
|------------------------|-------|--|-----------------|------------------|
| M. Saud Anwar          | CT    | South Windsor City Council                     | LOCAL           | 2013, 2015, 2017 |
| Maryam Khan            | CT    | Windsor Board of Education                     | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Ahmad Saadaldin        | FL    | FL House of Representatives                    | SL              | 2017             |
| Altaf Ahmed            | FL    | Broward County Commission                      | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Asima Azam             | FL    | Orlando City Council                           | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Barbara Sharief        | FL    | Broward County Commission                      | COUNTY          | 2013, 2016       |
| Duysevi (Sevi) Miyar   | FL    | FL House of Representatives                    | SL              | 2016             |
| Sarah El-Badri         | FL    | Orlando City Council                           | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Rizwan Ahmed           | FL    | FL State House                                 | SL              | 2018             |
| Annisa Karim           | FL    | FL State Senate                                | SL              | 2018             |
| Ruta Jouniari          | FL    | Sarasota County Commission                     | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Ahmed Hassan           | GA    | Clarkston City Council                         | LOCAL           | 2013, 2017       |
| Aisha Yaqoob           | GA    | Georgia House of Representatives               | SL              | 2018             |
| Amir Farokhi           | GA    | Atlanta City Council                           | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Bassem Fakhoury        | GA    | Roswell City Council                           | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Mohammed Ali Bhuiyan   | GA    | US House of Representatives                    | CONGRESS        | 2017             |
| Liliana Bakhtiari      | GA    | Atlanta City Council                           | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Sheikh Rahman          | GA    | GA State Senate                                | SL              | 2018             |
| Tokhir "T.R." Radjabov | GA    | GA House of Representatives                    | SL              | 2016             |
| Abshir Mohamed Omar    | IA    | Des Moines City Council                        | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Ako Abdul-Samad        | IA    | Iowa House of Representatives                  | SL              | 2006-2018        |
| Mazahir Salih          | IA    | Iowa City City Council                         | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Abdelnasser Rashid     | IL    | Cook County Board of Commisioners              | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Ahmed Salim            | IL    | US House of Representatives                    | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Anisha Patel           | IL    | Arlington Heights School Board                 | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Asma Akhras            | IL    | Indian Prarie Public Library Board of Trustees | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Bahira Karim           | IL    | Village of Worth Board of Trustees             | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Bushra Amiwala         | IL    | Cook County Board of Commissioners             | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Dahoud "Dave" Shalabi  | IL    | Orland Park School Board of Education          | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Dilara Sayeed          | IL    | IL House of Representatives                    | SL              | 2018             |
| Hadiya Afzal           | IL    | Dupage County Board                            | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Harish Patel           | IL    | IL House of Representatives                    | SL              | 2016             |
| Karim Khoja            | IL    | Village of Glenview Board of Trustees          | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Mehrunisa Qayyum       | IL    | Downers Grove Township Board of Trustees       | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Sameena Mustafa        | IL    | US House of Representatives                    | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Zahra Suratwala        | IL    | DuPage County County Board                     | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Neill Mohammad         | IL    | US House of Representatives                    | CONGRESS        | 2018             |

| Full Name                | State | Legislative Body                                   | Level of Office | Election Year(s) |
|--------------------------|-------|--|-----------------|------------------|
| Sadia Gul Covert         | IL    | Dupage County Board                                | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Andre Carson             | IN    | US House of Representatives                        | CONGRESS        | 2008, 2018       |
| Afroz Khan               | MA    | Newburyport City Council                           | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Asima Silva              | MA    | Wachusett Regional School District Committee       | LOCAL           | 2015             |
| Charles Clemons Muhammad | MA    | MA House of Representatives                        | SL              | 2018             |
| Deeqo Jibril             | MA    | Boston City Council                                | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Hassan Williams          | MA    | Boston City Council                                | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Hazem Mahmoud            | MA    | Newburyport City Council                           | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Kemal Bozkurt            | MA    | Lawrence Public Schools School Board               | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Mehreen Butt             | MA    | Wakefield Town Council                             | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Nadeem Mazen             | MA    | US House of Representatives                        | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Nichole Mossalam         | MA    | Malden School Committee                            | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Omar Boukili             | MA    | Somerville Board of Alderman                       | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Patricia O'Brien         | MA    | Burlington Town Meeting                            | LOCAL           | 2012, 2016       |
| Rashid Shaikh            | MA    | Shrewsbury Town Meeting Member                     | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Sarah Khatib             | MA    | Walpole Planning Board                             | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Sumbul Siddiqui          | MA    | Cambridge City Council                             | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Tahirah Amatul-Wadud     | MA    | US House of Representatives                        | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Aisha Khan               | MD    | MD House of Delegates                              | SL              | 2018             |
| Anis Ahmed               | MD    | MD House of Delegates                              | SL              | 2018             |
| Bilal Ali                | MD    | MD House of Delegates                              | SL              | 2017             |
| Fatmata Barrie           | MD    | MD House of Delegates                              | SL              | 2018             |
| Hamza Khan               | MD    | MD House of Delegates                              | SL              | 2018             |
| Hassan Giordano          | MD    | Baltimore City Circuit Court                       | JUDICIARY       | 2018             |
| Hassan "Jay" Jalisi      | MD    | MD House of Delegates                              | SL              | 2014, 2018       |
| Marcus Goodwin           | MD    | Washington DC City Council                         | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Mohammad Siddique        | MD    | Montgomery County Council                          | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Nadia Hashimi            | MD    | US House of Representatives                        | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Raaheela Ahmed           | MD    | Prince George's County Public Schools School Board | COUNTY          | 2012, 2016       |
| Rida Bukhari-Rizvi       | MD    | Montgomery County Central Democratic Committee     | PARTY           | 2016             |
| Sean Stinnett            | MD    | MD House of Delegates                              | SL              | 2018             |
| Shabnam Ahmed            | MD    | MD House of Delegates                              | SL              | 2018             |
| Talib Karim              | MD    | Hyattsville City Council                           | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Sabina Taj               | MD    | Howard County Board of Education                   | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Babur Lateef             | MD    | Prince William County School Board                 | COUNTY          | 2018             |

| Full Name             | State | Legislative Body                             | Level of Office | Election Year(s) |
|-----------------------|-------|--|-----------------|------------------|
| Pious Ali             | ME    | Portland City Council                        | LOCAL           | 2016             |
| Abdikadir (AK) Hassan | MI    | Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board        | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Abdul "Al" Haidous    | MI    | Wayne County Commission                      | COUNTY          | 2014, 2018       |
| Abdul El-Sayed        | MI    | MI Governor                                  | SW              | 2018             |
| Abdullah Hammoud      | MI    | MI House of Representatives                  | SL              | 2016, 2018       |
| Abraham Aiyash        | MI    | MI State Senate                              | SL              | 2018             |
| Abu Musa              | MI    | Hamtramck City Council                       | LOCAL           | 2013, 2015, 2017 |
| Adel Mozip            | MI    | Dearborn Public Schools Board                | LOCAL           | 2016             |
| Anam Miah             | MI    | Michigan State Senate                        | SL              | 2018             |
| Asim Alavi            | MI    | MI Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission | SW              | 2012             |
| Bill Saad             | MI    | Underground Storage Tank Authority Board     | SW              | 2017             |
| Bill Bazzi            | MI    | Dearborne Heights City Council               | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Fadel Al-Marsoumi     | MI    | Hamtramck City Council                       | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Fadwa Hammoud         | MI    | Dearborn Public Schools School Board         | LOCAL           | 2016             |
| Fayrouz Bazzi         | MI    | Dearborn City Council                        | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Fayrouz Saad          | MI    | US House of Representatives                  | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Ghulam Qadir          | MI    | MI State Senate                              | SL              | 2018             |
| Hakim Fakhoury        | MI    | Dearborn City Council                        | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Hussein Berry         | MI    | Dearborn Public Schools Board                | LOCAL           | 2016             |
| Jeff Mallad           | MI    | Dearborn Heights City Council                | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Khodr Farhat          | MI    | Dearborn Public Schools School Board         | LOCAL           | 2016             |
| Mariam Bazzi          | MI    | Wayne County Circuit Court                   | JUDICIARY       | 2017             |
| Mike Sareini          | MI    | Dearborn City Council                        | LOCAL           | 2014, 2017       |
| Mo Baydoun            | MI    | Dearborn Heights City Council                | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Mohammed Al-Somiri    | MI    | Hamtramck City Council                       | LOCAL           | 2015, 2017       |
| Mohammed Hassan       | MI    | Wayne County Commission                      | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Nada Al-Hanooti       | MI    | Dearborn City Council                        | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Nasim Ansari          | MI    | Kalamazoo County Council                     | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Rabbi Alam            | MI    | MI House of Representatives                  | SL              | 2018             |
| Ramez (Zack) Haidar   | MI    | Dearborn City Council                        | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Rashida Tlaib         | MI    | US House of Representatives                  | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Saad Almasmari        | MI    | Hamtramck City Council                       | LOCAL           | 2015, 2017       |
| Sam Baydoun           | MI    | Wayne County Commission                      | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Sam Salamey           | MI    | MI District Courts                           | JUDICIARY       | 2012, 2018       |
| Susan Dabaja          | MI    | Dearborn City Council                        | LOCAL           | 2013, 2017       |
| Tarek Baydoun         | MI    | Dearborn City Council                        | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Yameen Jaffer         | MI    | Pittsfield Board of Trustees                 | LOCAL           | 2016             |



| <b>Full Name</b>    | <b>State</b> | <b>Legislative Body</b>                   | <b>Level of Office</b> | <b>Election Year(s)</b> |
|---------------------|--------------|---|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Syed Rob            | MI           | MI State House                            | SL                     | 2018                    |
| Billy Amen          | MI           | Dearborn School Board                     | LOCAL                  | 2018                    |
| Khalil El-Saghir    | MI           | Dearborn School Board                     | LOCAL                  | 2018                    |
| Khodr Farhat        | MI           | Dearborn School Board                     | LOCAL                  | 2018                    |
| Adel A. Harb        | MI           | Wayne County Circuit Court                | JUDICIARY              | 2016, 2018              |
| Adel A. Mozip       | MI           | Dearborn School Board                     | LOCAL                  | 2016, 2018              |
| Celia Nasser        | MI           | Dearborn School Board                     | LOCAL                  | 2017                    |
| Aamina Ahmed        | MI           | Plymouth Canton Community School District | LOCAL                  | 2018                    |
| David Turfe         | MI           | MI District Courts                        | JUDICIARY              | 2018                    |
| Aliyah Sabree       | MI           | MI District Courts                        | JUDICIARY              | 2018                    |
| Salwa Fawaz         | MI           | Crestwood School Board                    | LOCAL                  | 2018                    |
| Yasir Khogali       | MI           | City of Plymouth District Library Board   | LOCAL                  | 2018                    |
| Abdi Warsame        | MN           | Minneapolis City Council                  | LOCAL                  | 2013, 2017              |
| Abdi Daisane        | MN           | St Cloud City Council                     | LOCAL                  | 2016                    |
| Abdi Gurhan Mohamed | MN           | Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board     | LOCAL                  | 2017                    |
| Amir Malik          | MN           | MN House of Representatives               | SL                     | 2018                    |
| Fartun Ahmed        | MN           | Hopkins Public Schools School Board       | LOCAL                  | 2017                    |
| Ilhan Omar          | MN           | US House of Representatives               | CONGRESS               | 2018                    |
| Jamal Abdulahi      | MN           | US House of Representatives               | CONGRESS               | 2018                    |
| Jeremiah Ellison    | MN           | Minneapolis City Council                  | LOCAL                  | 2017                    |
| Keith Ellison       | MN           | MN Attorney General                       | SW                     | 2018                    |
| Mohamed Farah       | MN           | Minneapolis City Council                  | LOCAL                  | 2017                    |
| Mohamed Barre       | MN           | Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board     | LOCAL                  | 2017                    |
| Mohamud Noor        | MN           | MN House of Representatives               | SL                     | 2014, 2016, 2018        |
| Regina Mustafa      | MN           | Rochester City Council                    | LOCAL                  | 2018                    |
| Ali Chehem          | MN           | US Senate                                 | CONGRESS               | 2018                    |
| Zarina Baber        | MN           | MN Lt. Governor                           | SW                     | 2018                    |
| Abdulkadir Abdalla  | MN           | MN State House                            | SL                     | 2018                    |
| Osman Ahmed         | MN           | MN State House                            | SL                     | 2018                    |
| Omar Fateh          | MN           | MN State House                            | SL                     | 2018                    |
| Hodan Hassan        | MN           | MN State House                            | SL                     | 2018                    |
| Haaris Pasha        | MN           | MN State House                            | SL                     | 2018                    |
| Fadumo Taani        | MN           | MN State House                            | SL                     | 2018                    |
| Siad Ali            | MN           | Minneapolis Board of Education            | LOCAL                  | 2014, 2018              |
| Fardousa Jama       | MN           | Mankato City Council                      | LOCAL                  | 2018                    |
| Abdi Roble          | MN           | Rochester School Board                    | LOCAL                  | 2018                    |
| Hala Asamarai       | MN           | Columbia Heights School Board             | LOCAL                  | 2016, 2018              |

| Full Name               | State | Legislative Body                                       | Level of Office | Election Year(s) |
|-------------------------|-------|--|-----------------|------------------|
| Fahiym Hanna            | NC    | Guilford County Board of Commissioners                 | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Mujtaba Mohammed        | NC    | NC State Senate  | SL              | 2018             |
| Naveed Aziz             | NC    | NC State Senate  | SL              | 2016, 2018       |
| Nida Aziz Allam         | NC    | NC Democratic Party                                    | PARTY           | 2017             |
| Zainab Baloch           | NC    | Raleigh City Council                                   | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Nasif Majeed            | NC    | NC State House of Representatives                      | SL              | 2018             |
| Aboul Khan              | NH    | NH House of Representatives                            | SL              | 2012, 2016, 2018 |
| Hassan Essa             | NH    | Manchester City Council                                | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Safiya Wazir            | NH    | NH State House   | SL              | 2018             |
| Adnan Zakaria           | NJ    | Prospect Park City Council                             | LOCAL           | 2016             |
| Agha Khan               | NJ    | US House of Representatives                            | CONGRESS        | 2016, 2018       |
| Al Abdelaziz            | NJ    | Paterson City Council                                  | LOCAL           | 2016             |
| Alaa "Al" Abdel-Aziz    | NJ    | Paterson City Council                                  | LOCAL           | 2016, 2018       |
| Alfred Mohammed         | NJ    | Linden City Council                                    | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Aslon Goow              | NJ    | Paterson City Council                                  | LOCAL           | 2012, 2016       |
| Assad Akhter            | NJ    | Passaic County Board of Chosen Freeholders             | COUNTY          | 2016, 2018       |
| Atif Nazir              | NJ    | Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders           | COUNTY          | 2017             |
| Azim Uddin              | NJ    | Franklin Township Council                              | COUNTY          | 2016             |
| Azra Baig               | NJ    | South Brunswick Board of Education                     | LOCAL           | 2013, 2016       |
| Baseemah Beasley        | NJ    | Irvington Democratic Party                             | PARTY           | 2016             |
| Dawn Haynes             | NJ    | Newark Public Schools School Board                     | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Fahim Abedrabbo         | NJ    | Clifton Public Schools School Board                    | LOCAL           | 2016             |
| Frank Gilliam           | NJ    | City of Atlantic City                                  | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Hassan Abdul-Rasheed    | NJ    | Orange City Council                                    | LOCAL           | 2006, 2010, 2018 |
| Hazim Yassin            | NJ    | Red Bank City Council                                  | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Kalimah Ahmad           | NJ    | Jersey City Municipal Court                            | JUDICIARY       | 2016             |
| Mohamed Khairullah      | NJ    | Borough of Prospect Park                               | LOCAL           | 2005, 2018       |
| Mohammed Akhtaruz-zaman | NJ    | Paterson City Council                                  | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Mohammed Hameeduddin    | NJ    | Teaneck City Council                                   | LOCAL           | 2010, 2016       |
| Mohammed Hussain        | NJ    | Prospect Park Board of Education                       | LOCAL           | 2011, 2014, 2017 |
| Mohammed Raqeeb         | NJ    | Piscataway Township Council                            | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Mussab Ali              | NJ    | Jersey City Public Schools Board of Education          | LOCAL           | 2017, 2018       |
| Nadia Kahf              | NJ    | Gov. Murphy Transition Team: Law and Justice Committee | SW              | 2017             |
| Nancy Uddin             | NJ    | Monmouth Regional High School School Board             | LOCAL           | 2017             |

| Full Name          | State | Legislative Body                                    | Level of Office | Election Year(s) |
|--------------------|-------|---|-----------------|------------------|
| Nuran Nabi         | NJ    | Plainsboro Township Committee                       | LOCAL           | 2007, 2017       |
| Nureed Saeed       | NJ    | South Orange Board of Trustees                      | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Rashon Hasan       | NJ    | Newark City Council                                 | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Sadaf Jaffer       | NJ    | Montgomery Township Committee                       | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Salim Patel        | NJ    | Passaic City Council                                | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Shahanaz Arjumand  | NJ    | Teaneck Township Board of Education                 | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Shahin Khalique    | NJ    | Paterson City Council                               | LOCAL           | 2016             |
| Sharifa Salaam     | NJ    | East Orange, Irvington, and Newark Municipal Courts | JUDICIARY       | 2014, 2016       |
| Shariq Ahmad       | NJ    | Edison Democratic Organization                      | PARTY           | 2017             |
| Shereef Elnahal    | NJ    | NJ Department of Health Commissioner                | SW              | 2018             |
| Steven Brister     | NJ    | East Orange City Municipal Court                    | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Tahsina Ahmed      | NJ    | Borough of Haledon City Council                     | LOCAL           | 2015, 2017       |
| Ted Green          | NJ    | East Orange City Council                            | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Zeesan Saddiqi     | NJ    | Old Bridge Town Council                             | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Mahmoud Mahmoud    | NJ    | US House of Representatives                         | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Siaka Sherif       | NJ    | Orange Board of Education                           | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Mariam Khan        | NJ    | Dennis Township Board of Education                  | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Mohammad Ramadan   | NJ    | Haledon Board of Education                          | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Alaa Matari        | NJ    | Prospect Park Borough Councilman                    | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Adam Chaabane      | NJ    | Woodland Park Board of Education                    | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Amany Ramadan      | NJ    | Paterson Board of Education                         | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Rashidah Hasan     | NJ    | Orange City Municipal Court                         | JUDICIARY       | 2017             |
| Abbas Akhil        | NM    | NM State House                                      | SL              | 2018             |
| Jesse Sbaih        | NV    | US Senate   | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Robert Jackson     | NY    | NY State Senate                                     | SL              | 2014, 2016, 2018 |
| Tahseen Chowdhury  | NY    | NY State Senate                                     | SL              | 2018             |
| Uzma Syed          | NY    | Syosset County School Committee                     | COUNTY          | 2017, 2018       |
| Omar Vaid          | NY    | US House of Representatives                         | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Shadia Tadros      | NY    | Syracuse City Court                                 | JUDICIARY       | 2018             |
| Shahabuddeen Ally  | NY    | Manhattan Civil Court Judge                         | JUDICIARY       | 2018             |
| Charles Fall       | NY    | NY State Assembly                                   | SL              | 2018             |
| Basheer Jones      | OH    | Cleveland City Council                              | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Mohamed Al-Hamdani | OH    | Dayton Public Schools Board of Education            | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Nadeen Hayden      | OH    | Cleveland Heights Municipal Court                   | JUDICIARY       | 2017             |
| Noha Eyada         | OH    | Mason City School District School Board             | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Ismail Mohamed     | OH    | OH State House                                      | SL              | 2018             |
| Kayse Jama         | OR    | OR State Senate                                     | SL              | 2018             |

| Full Name                 | State | Legislative Body                                     | Level of Office | Election Year(s) |
|---------------------------|-------|--|-----------------|------------------|
| Kareem Kandil             | PA    | PA House of Representatives                          | SL              | 2018             |
| Nina Ahmad                | PA    | PA Lieutenant Governor                               | SW              | 2018             |
| Jason Dawkins             | PA    | PA State House                                       | SL              | 2014, 2018       |
| Naveen Malik              | SD    | South Dakota House of Representatives                | SL              | 2018             |
| Andre Canty               | TN    | Knox County School Board                             | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Hana Ali                  | TN    | TN House of Representatives                          | SL              | 2018             |
| Abdel Elhassan            | TX    | Irving City Council                                  | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Ali A. Khorasani          | TX    | US House of Representatives                          | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Dalia Kasseb              | TX    | Pearland City Council                                | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Omar Kadir                | TX    | Williamson County Commission                         | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Salman Bhojani            | TX    | Eules City Council                                   | LOCAL           | 2016, 2018       |
| Shayan Elahi              | TX    | Irving City Council                                  | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Syed Hassan               | TX    | Tarrant County Commissioners Court                   | COUNTY          | 2018             |
| Tahir Javed               | TX    | US House of Representatives                          | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Letitia Plummer           | TX    | US House of Representatives                          | CONGRESS        | 2018             |
| Rabeea Collier            | TX    | Texas District Courts                                | JUDICIARY       | 2018             |
| Nuzhat Hye                | TX    | Irving Independent School District Board of Trustees | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Mary Khalaf               | UT    | Ogden City Council                                   | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Abrar Omeish              | VA    | Fairfax County School Board                          | COUNTY          | 2017             |
| Atif Qarni                | VA    | Commonwealth of Virginia, Secretary of Education     | SW              | 2018             |
| Hala Ayala                | VA    | VA House of Delegates                                | SL              | 2017             |
| Hannah Risheq             | VA    | Virginia State House of Delegates                    | SL              | 2017             |
| Jamaal Johnston           | VA    | VA House of Delegates                                | SL              | 2017             |
| Jasmine Moawad-Barrientos | VA    | VA State Senate                                      | SL              | 2019             |
| Mo Seifeldein             | VA    | Alexandria City Council                              | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Sam Rasoul                | VA    | VA House of Delegates                                | SL              | 2014, 2017       |
| Yasmine Taeb              | VA    | VA State Senate                                      | SL              | 2019             |
| Haseeb Javed              | VA    | Manassas Park City Council                           | LOCAL           | 2018             |
| Faisal Gill               | VT    | Vermont Commons School Board                         | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Ahmed Abdi                | WA    | Port of Seattle Commission                           | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Ubah Aden                 | WA    | Tukwila School Board                                 | LOCAL           | 2017             |
| Zak Idan                  | WA    | Tukwila City Council                                 | LOCAL           | 2017             |

SL – State level legislative seat

SW – Statewide position, i.e. governor

