



Proclamation of the Albany County Legislature Standing with Our Muslim Neighbors Against Islamophobia

Co-sponsors: Hon. Douglas Bullock, Hon. Sam Fein, Hon. Christopher Higgins, Hon. David Mayo, Hon. Merton Simpson, Hon. Raymond Joyce, Hon. Alison McLean Lane

WHEREAS, throughout its long history, the City and County of Albany have been built on the strength of their ethnic, racial, and religious diversity; and

WHEREAS, the county seat, the City of Albany, is a city of immigrants, with 11.25% of city residents in 2013 born outside of the United States, and is ranked sixth of the 10 top cities in New York State with foreign-born populations¹; and

WHEREAS, as of 2014, Muslims represented about 1.5%² of Albany County's total estimated population of 308,171 ; in 2015, the estimate for the county's Muslim population was about 3%⁴; and

WHEREAS, the overall Muslim population in the larger Capital Region/tri-cities is well over 10,000, including immigrants from Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Turkey, Bosnia, Malaysia, Egypt, Pakistan, Iran, India, and African nations, as well as American-born Muslims, who attend six mosques⁵, three of them in Albany County; and

WHEREAS, Muslims are integral members of our community and are represented in all professions, from store clerks, laborers, and small business owners to physicians, medical technicians, college professors, chemists, engineers, accountants, artists, musicians, and business leaders; and

WHEREAS, since the Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015, and the San Bernardino terrorist attack in California in December 2015, fear of Muslims has increased nationwide; and

WHEREAS, incidents of violence and hatred against Muslims, and inflammatory comments by public figures, have also increased, with the Council on Islamic-American Relations (CAIR) stating that it “has received more reports about acts of Islamophobic violence, threats, intimidation, and discrimination targeting American Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslim) and Islamic institutions since the Paris attacks than during any other limited period of time since the 9/11 terror attacks”⁶; and

WHEREAS, in response to the San Bernardino attack. President Obama, in a national televised speech on December 6, rejected the view that there should be a war on Islam; acknowledged that the vast majority of the victims of terrorism are Muslims and that extremists are a “tiny fraction” of Muslims worldwide; and rejected both discrimination against American Muslims and a religious test for those admitted to this country, saying that “Muslim Americans are our friends and neighbors, our co-workers, our sports heroes, and yes, they are our men and women in uniform who are willing to die in defense of our country...;” and

WHEREAS, President Obama also said, “Let’s not forget that freedom is more powerful than fear”;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the undersigned members of the Albany County Legislature, hereby declare that fear will not divide us; that we recognize that the threats posed by Islamophobia to our American values of religious freedom and cultural diversity are threats against our very way of life in Albany County and the United States; and that we as a community stand firmly with our Muslim neighbors against Islamophobia in all its manifestations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this proclamation be sent to U.S. Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, U.S. Representatives Paul Tonko and Chris Gibson, Governor Andrew Cuomo, State Senator Neil Breslin, State Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy, and State Assemblyman Phillip Steck.

¹ Civic Dashboards: Albany, NY, <http://www.cividdashboards.com/city/albanv-nv-16000US3601000/>

² Religion, Albany County, NY, http://www.bestplaces.net/religion/county/new_york/albanv

³ Albany County, New York: Quick Facts from the U.S. Census Bureau, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/36001.html>

⁴ “Albany County executive denounces anti-Muslim sentiment, embraces diverse community” by Bethany Bump, *Albany Times Union*, December 12, 2014, <http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Albanv-County-executive-denounces-anti-Muslim-6694177.php>

⁵ “A Muslim in the Capital Region” by Azra Haqqie, *Albany Times Union*, February 6, 2015, <http://www.timesunion.com/5181ife/article/A-Muslim-in-the-Capital-Region-6083646.php>

⁶CAIR Welcomes President Obama’s Rejection of Islamophobia in Oval Office Address, December 7,2015, <http://www.cair.com/press-center/press-releases/13290-cair-welcomes-president-obama-s-reiection-of-islamophobia-in-oval-office-address.html>