



## **7th Annual National Muslim Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill**

**June 13-14, 2022**

PROMOTING GREATER MUSLIM POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT AND STRENGTHENING TIES WITH CONGRESS

**Advocacy Handbook, Program, and Legislative Agenda**

# About Us



The US Council of Muslim Organizations (USCMO), is a coalition of several leading national, regional, and local Muslim organizations.

USCMO Founding Members: American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), Muslim Alliance in North America (MANA), Muslim American Society (MAS), Muslim Legal Funds of America (MLFA), Muslim Ummah of North America (MUNA), and The Mosque Cares - Ministry of Imam W. Deen Mohammed (TMC)

## Our Vision

The vision of the US Council of Muslim Organizations is that America's Muslims will be socially successful in direct proportion to how well we do three things:

- Streamline "all-way" communication between and among our local and national organizations
- Build a laser-focused, consensus-based national vision
- Cooperate in mobilizing the Muslim populations of our local communities and that of our fellow-Americans for the good of all.

## Our Mission

The mission of the US Council of Muslim Organizations:

- To open effective communication and co-ordination spectrums between all American Muslim organizations
- To help solidify these mutually crucial relationships
- To create and sustain an urgent, collective sense of direction that well-serves the American Muslim community toward the betterment and guidance of our nation
- No striving ranks higher in priority for American Muslim organizations and their community today than the hard work of unity.

# Welcome

## 7<sup>th</sup> Annual National American Muslim Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill

Dear Advocacy Day Delegate,

Assalamu Alaykum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh:

On behalf of the US Council of Muslim Organizations (USCMO), it is my pleasure to welcome you to the 7th Annual National Muslim Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill.

USCMO's Advocacy Day has become a national must-attend event attracting Muslim activists from all over the country and our numbers are growing year after year.

While last year's Muslim Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill was held virtually, this year's Advocacy Day is taking place in person with delegates attending meetings with members of Congress and their staff in the U.S. Capitol.

USCMO's Muslim Advocacy Day events focus on various issues important to our country and our community such as promoting social justice and civil rights; holding federal national security programs accountable; supporting a pathway to citizenship for Afghan evacuees; canceling student debt and calling for zero-interest student loans; and creating a Combatting Islamophobia office within the State Department, and defending human rights in Palestine, India, and China.

USCMO encourages greater community engagement in shaping public policy through congressional advocacy events like today's advocacy day. Civic engagement is the bedrock to ensure that the rights of all Americans -- including Muslims -- are well protected.

To make this year's advocacy day a productive and an enjoyable learning experience, you will find simple tips on how to conduct your meetings with Congressional offices, talking points, USCMO's congressional fact sheets, and other useful information.

Please use this handbook as a resource during your meetings on Capitol Hill to help navigate your state delegation's capacity to build congressional support for USCMO's inclusive policy agenda.



*Oussama Jammal*

USCMO Secretary General

Finally, I would like to recognize the great work, dedication, and professional effort put forth by USCMO's National Muslim Advocacy Day Steering Committee. We thank them for the many months and long hours they spent to ensure the success of this event.

Happy Advocacy Day!



# Program

---

## Monday June 13, 2022

\*\*\*Special Congressional COVID-19 Protocols For How To Enter Monday June 13th Morning Session at the Capitol Visitors Center (CVC) \*\*\* The Main Public Doors To The CVC Are Closed \*\*\* To Enter the CVC, Follow the Instructions Below\*\*\*

9:00 AM State Delegations will meet-up with their team captain(s) and a volunteer congressional office staff escort at the entrance of one of the U.S. House Congressional office buildings: Cannon, Longworth, or Rayburn. This predetermined meeting location will be noted on each state delegation's voter voice app meeting schedule. Delegations will be credentialed and escorted into the CVC. **PLEASE BRING A VALID PHOTO I.D. MAKE SURE TO ARRIVE ON TIME.**

8:30 AM	Registration starts in front of the CVC Auditorium Room 200
9:15 AM	Invocation of Prayer in CVC <b>Auditorium</b> Room 200
9:30 AM	Opening remarks by USCMO's Secretary General and Board Members
10:00 AM	Orientation and Training
11:30 AM	Picture Outside in Front of U.S. Capitol on the Front Steps of the House Side of Congress
12:00-5:00 PM	Break Room Doors Open: Longworth 1539
12:00-5:00 PM	Congressional Meetings
1:00-4:00 PM	Prayer in Longworth 1539
5:00 PM	Evening Reception at: Longworth 1539

## Tuesday June 14, 2022

8:30 AM	Rayburn Room B369
9:00 AM	Coffee, Brief Remarks, and Day-2 Advocacy
10:00 - 5:00	Congressional Meetings
10:00 - 5:00	Breakroom in Rayburn B369
12:00 PM	Prayer and break in Rayburn B369
5:00 PM	Close of Event Remarks at Rayburn B369

# Activism in Action

---





# Tips for a Successful Meeting on Capitol Hill

---

1. Make sure to download the VoterVoice App. Log in using the email you registered with. Search for the organization “USCMO.” Go to the menu in the upper right hand corner and select “Meetings” to find your delegation and state congressional meetings schedule.
2. Be prepared and on time.
3. Pick a group leader to make introductions.
4. The group leader should introduce themselves and the group, including local district ties if applicable.
5. Be brief and clear. It is okay to engage in some polite conversation but don't waste too much time.
6. Take turns having different delegates state the primary advocacy issues and the solutions. Try not to get too much into much details as meetings are usually short. Instead, reference the congressional-leave behind handbook.
7. If possible, use real life examples, like personal and community stories and local touch-points.
8. Be polite and listen carefully.
9. Leave behind your supporting materials and contact information.
10. Fill out the online meeting report form
11. Get contact information and make sure to follow-up.
12. Don't forget to get a picture! Use on social media with the hashtag: **#MuslimHillDay**



# Meeting Structure and Talking Points

---

## Before The Meeting:

- Designate a group leader. Have the group leader introduce themselves and the group, including local district ties if applicable.
- Designate a note taker to fill out the Voter Voice app report form.

## During The Meeting:

Introduce your state delegation, any local constituents, and that during today's meeting you will be primarily discussing:

- **House and Senate:** Supporting FY 2023 Appropriations request language seeking stronger transparency requirements for the DHS' Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3).
- **House and Senate:** Co-sponsoring the Afghan Adjustment Act, supported by Rep. Earl Blumenauer and Sen. Chris Coons, which would allow the tens of thousands of Afghan evacuees to apply to become lawful permanent residents one year after arrival.
- **House and Senate:** Supporting the cancelation of all student debt and endorsing the American Muslim community's call for Congress and the White House establish interest-free federal student loans.
- **Senate Only:** Co-sponsoring Senators Cory Booker, Ben Cardin, and Bernie Sanders' Combating International Islamophobia Act (S. 3384) and calling for a Senate Foreign Relations Committee mark-up of the bill.

Then jump right into the issues and do not get distracted with pleasantries...

**Note:** See the next section for topline meeting issue policy talking points and requests.

## Wrapping Up the Meeting:

- Thank the legislator and/or staff for the visit.
- Obtain contact information of the staff present for the meeting.
- Follow-up on any requests made by staff.
- Relate all requests to USCMO, so they can be immediately responded to.
- Complete the meeting report on the Voter Voice app.

## TOPLINE MEETING POLICY ISSUE TALKING POINTS & REQUESTS

### ISSUE ONE: HOUSE AND SENATE: HOLDING DHS'S CVE / CP3 PROGRAMS ACCOUNTABLE

**Overall Position:** USCMO supports congressional oversight of DHS's Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) and endorses congressionally mandated reporting requirements in the FY 2023 appropriations cycle for DHS's Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3).

- CP3 evolves from DHS's Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) initiative, which cast Muslim and Arab communities as inherently suspicious and flagged religious and political activity as signs of potential violence in an effort to identify the next terrorist.
- DHS officials have recognized that CVE was biased because it assumed that "individuals who are high risk were coming from specific religious and ethnic communities," and President Biden pledged to end programs like it while campaigning for office. In practice, however, CP3 expands the core CVE prevention model.
- USCMO endorses the reporting language proposed for inclusion in the 2023 DHS funding bill that was supported by ten House members in a [Dear Colleague letter](#) led by Rep. Rashida Tlaib, sent to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security on April 26, 2022.

**Request to Congress:** USCMO supports greater transparency and accountability for CP3, including adding disclosure requirements for the program in the upcoming 2023 DHS funding bill.

- U.S. House offices are being asked to: Contact the office of Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib to express support, in addition to U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security Chairwoman Lucille Roybal-Allard and Ranking Member Chuck Fleischmann.
- U.S. Senate offices are being asked to: Contact U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security Chairman Chris Murphy and Ranking Member Shelley Moore Capito urging the subcommittee also adopt the recommendations of Rep. Tlaib's dear colleague letter.

**Good Reason to Support:** Given CP3's discriminatory legacy and its reliance on a model that lacks any proven efficacy at preventing violence - it is important to disclose more detail on how it works, whom it most impacts, what it is relying on as signs of violence, and safeguards it incorporates.



## ISSUE TWO: HOUSE AND SENATE: SUPPORT THE AFGHAN ADJUSTMENT ACT

**Overall Position:** USCMO is urging Congress to support and co-sponsor the Afghan Adjustment Act, championed by Rep. Earl Blumenauer and Sen. Chris Coons, which would allow the tens of thousands of Afghan evacuees to apply to become lawful permanent residents one year after arrival.

While not yet introduced - the Afghan Adjustment Act would allow the tens of thousands of Afghan evacuees to apply to become lawful permanent residents one year after arrival. While the bill has not yet been formally introduced, it is being championed in the U.S. House by Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and in the Senate by Senators Chris Coons (D-CT), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), and Patrick Leahy (D-VT).

**Request to Congress:** U.S. House and Senate offices are being asked to respectively contact Rep. Blumenauer and Sen. Coons offices to express their support for this bill, to become an original co-sponsor, and help facilitate its introduction in upcoming spending bills.

### Why Do We Need This Bill?

- In February, DHS announced that “76,000 Afghan nationals who have now joined [over 200] communities across the country.” About half of those 76,000 Afghan evacuees have already been granted an Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV), and can apply for permanent residency, also known as a green card, which offers a years-long pathway to U.S. citizenship.
- However, some 36,000 Afghan evacuees arrived in the U.S. as humanitarian parolees – commonly referred to as a “[Priority 2 \(P-2\) designation](#)” – and were only granted two years of temporary residency under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). Afghans with a P-2 designation do not have a pathway to permanent residency or U.S. citizenship and their futures remain uncertain. The Afghan Adjustment Act would fix that.

**Good Reason to Support:** USCMO believes that the United States has a moral obligation following our military withdrawal from Afghanistan to protect and ensure that every Afghan evacuee who sets foot on American soil has a pathway to permanent residency and citizenship.

Our nation cannot allow Afghan humanitarian parolees in the United States to live with the uncertainty of where they will go next once their temporary residence status expires. It is not right. It is not the American way.

## ISSUE THREE: HOUSE AND SENATE: CANCELING STUDENT DEBT, ESTABLISHING ZERO INTEREST FEDERAL STUDENT LOANS

**Overall Position:** USCMO is calling on Congress to cancel all student debt and endorse the American Muslim community's call for Congress and the White House establish interest-free federal student loans.

**The Issue:** Forty-five million American borrowers owe a [record](#) \$1.7 trillion in student debt and there is not a single signature student loan forgiveness and reform legislative package being debated before Congress.

In January 2022, USCMO joined dozens of Muslim organizations in a letter to President Biden calling on the administration to use executive action to establish long-term student debt relief by:

1. Forgive loans for borrowers whose past payments have already exceeded the principal amount of their original loan.
2. Canceling at least \$50,000 in student debt for remaining borrowers.
3. Creating principal-only student loans (which we refer to as “principled loans”) by waiving all interest payments on current and future student loans.
4. Extending the freeze on student loan payments until at least January 1, 2023.

**Request to Congress:** USCMO requests that House and Senate offices consider canceling all student debt and adopting these other discussed recommendations in any future legislative reform packages or other actions.

### Reasons to Support:

- One of the primary reasons why student loan debt is so damaging to so many millions of Americans is the presence of interest. Interest keeps the borrower in a cascading cycle of debt, from which they are often unable to escape. Congress should cancel student debt.
- Interest on student loans is particularly predatory because it tends to target individuals who are just starting out in life. Before they are able to secure jobs and careers, millions of Americans are being saddled with debt they may never have the means to pay off.
- Ending interest-based debt would be a positive step toward empowering students from communities of faith. Islam, Christianity, Judaism and other religions prohibit usury as a destructive and immoral practice. This means that many students of faith are forced to either delay higher education or compromise on their values. Principal-only loans would enable them to pursue their education freely and without taking on debt that conflicts with their firmly-held beliefs.

## ISSUE FOUR: SENATE ONLY: ADVANCING THE COMBATING INTERNATIONAL ISLAMOPHOBIA ACT - ESTABLISH A SPECIAL ENVOY AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO REPORT ON ISLAMOPHOBIA (S.3384)

**Overall Position:** USCMO is calling on all members of the U.S. Senate to co-sponsor Senators Cory Booker, Ben Cardin and Bernie Sanders' International Combating Islamophobia Act, which would establish a special envoy office at the U.S. State Department to monitor and combat international Islamophobia. The bill passed the House in September.

We are also urging all U.S. Senators to ask their colleagues in the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee to expedite the mark-up and adoption of this act.

**Request to Senators:** Offices interested in supporting S. 3383 are being asked to please contact Senator Cory Booker's office at [samir\\_hammoud@booker.senate.gov](mailto:samir_hammoud@booker.senate.gov).

**What Does This Bill Do?** The act would compel the State Department to develop a more comprehensive approach to fighting the global increase of Islamophobia, increasing its capacity to monitor and confront state and non-state actors. The two primary aims of the Combating International Islamophobia Act are:

1. Establishing an Office to Monitor and Combat Islamophobia at the State Department headed by a Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Islamophobia.
2. Amending the Foreign Assistance Act and International Religious Freedom Act to require annual reporting on Islamophobia in each foreign country and the steps taken by that country to combat it through educational programming and public awareness initiatives.

### Reasons to Support:

- In December, the U.S. House of Representatives voted 219-212 to approve Congresswomen Ilhan Omar and Jan Schakowsky's companion to S. 3384. The Senate should join their House colleagues in adopting this countering Islamophobia bill.
- While global Islamophobia, anti-Muslim state policies and hate incidents have increased for the past two decades the American Muslim community has consistently called for the creation of a special envoy position to monitor and combat this rising tide of hate – this act would make the special envoy position a reality.
- Anti-Muslim rhetoric, bigotry and acts of violence also go together with the rise of political parties that outwardly attack the rights of Muslims, especially in China, India, Burma, France, and other parts of Europe. The act would also cover anti-Muslim discrimination in Muslim majority countries targeting minority Muslim sects.
- Transnational white supremacist and Islamophobic hate group networks have also inspired their followers to commit acts of anti-Muslim violence and terrorism, including but not limited to the tragic summer 2021 murder of a Muslim family in London, Ontario and the 2019 Christchurch, New Zealand mosque shootings.



# Congressional Fact Sheet # 1

## JOINT HOUSE AND SENATE REQUEST: SUPPORT OVERSIGHT OF DHS'S CENTER FOR PREVENTION PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS (CP3)

The U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations (USCMO) is calling on the U.S. House and Senate to support greater transparency and accountability for CP3, including adding disclosure requirements for the program in the FY 2023 appropriations cycle for DHS's Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3).

USCMO endorses the reporting language proposed for inclusion in the 2023 DHS funding bill that was supported by ten House members in a [Dear Colleague letter](#) led by Rep. Rashida Tlaib, sent to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security on April 26, 2022.

### What Can Congress Do?

- **U.S. House offices are being asked to:** Contact the office of Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib to express support, in addition to U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security Chairwoman Lucille Roybal-Allard and Ranking Member Chuck Fleischmann.
- **U.S. Senate offices are being asked to:** Contact U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security Chairman Chris Murphy and Ranking Member Shelley Moore Capito urging the subcommittee also adopt the recommendations of Rep. Tlaib's dear colleague letter.

**What is CP3?** CP3 evolves from DHS's Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) initiative, which cast Muslim and Arab communities as inherently suspicious and flagged religious and political activity as signs of potential violence in an effort to identify the next terrorist. DHS officials have recognized that CVE was biased because it assumed that "individuals who are high risk were coming from specific religious and ethnic communities," and President Biden pledged to end programs like it while campaigning for office. Disappointingly, he did not.

In practice, however, CP3 expands the core CVE prevention model. CP3 efforts now apparently focus on a broader range of violence than only terrorism associated with Muslims, exposing even more communities to the risks it generates. The CP3 model - similar to CVE - employs ill-defined and commonplace phenomena among individuals — for example, social alienation, mood swings, having a "grievance" or "extremist" view — as predictors of future violence, raising the specter of reporting based on constitutionally-protected activism or racial and religious stereotypes that inform who is perceived as threatening.

Like CVE, CP3 tasks state and local stakeholders (police, safety agencies, community groups, and universities) with working together to identify and intervene with people experiencing such conditions, putting law enforcement between people and the help they may need.

**How to Improve Oversight of CP3:** Improving oversight and accountability of the CP3 program is essential given the program's discriminatory legacy and its reliance on a model that lacks any proven efficacy at preventing violence. Under these proposed reporting standards CP3 would be required to:

- list the signs of violence it has used from CVE through CP3;
- disclose data on which signs of violence (e.g., risk factors, extremist ideologies, grievances) gave rise to opened cases, and criminal referrals resulting from them;
- publish all civil rights and civil liberties protections applicable to the program; and
- publish information on CP3 grantees, including information on the communities they are targeting, types of violence they seek to address, and any evaluations of their work.

## Congressional Fact Sheet # 2

### JOINT HOUSE AND SENATE REQUEST: SUPPORTING AFGHAN EVACUEES - CO-SPONSOR THE AFGHAN ADJUSTMENT ACT

The U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations (USCMO), the largest coalition of major national, regional, and local Muslim organizations and Islamic institutions, calls on members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate to become original co-sponsors of the Afghan Adjustment Act.

The Afghan Adjustment Act would allow the tens of thousands of Afghan evacuees to apply to become lawful permanent residents one year after arrival. While the bill has not yet been formally introduced, it is being championed in the U.S. House by Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and in the Senate by Senators Chris Coons (D-CT), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), and Patrick Leahy (D-VT).

**REQUEST TO CONGRESS:** Contact Rep. Blumenauer or Sen. Coons' office to express your support for this bill, to become an original co-sponsor, and help facilitate its introduction in upcoming spending bills.

#### BACKGROUND ABOUT AFGHAN EVACUEES:

In February, the Department of Homeland Security announced that “76,000 Afghan nationals who have now joined [over 200] communities across the country.” About half of those 76,000 Afghan evacuees have already been granted an Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV), and can apply for permanent residency, also known as a green card, which offers a years-long pathway to U.S. citizenship.

However, some 36,000 Afghan evacuees arrived in the U.S. as humanitarian parolees – commonly referred to as a “[Priority 2 \(P-2\) designation](#)” – and were only granted two years of temporary residency under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). Afghans with a P-2 designation do not have a pathway to permanent residency or U.S. citizenship and their futures remain uncertain. The Afghan Adjustment Act would fix that.

USCMO believes that the United States has a moral obligation following our military withdrawal from Afghanistan to protect and ensure that every Afghan evacuee who sets foot on American soil has a pathway to permanent residency and citizenship. Our nation cannot allow Afghan humanitarian parolees in the United States to live with the uncertainty of where they will go next once their temporary residence status expires. It is not right. It is not the American way.

[Many expected](#) the legislation to become a part of the recently passed congressional omnibus spending bill. The Biden Administration is [currently considering](#) offering Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Afghans evacuees already in the United States, which does not offer a permanent guarantee of residence.

# Congressional Fact Sheet # 3

## JOINT HOUSE AND SENATE REQUEST: CANCELING STUDENT DEBT, ESTABLISH ZERO INTEREST FEDERAL STUDENT LOANS

The U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations (USCMO), the largest coalition of major national, regional, and local Muslim organizations and Islamic institutions, calls on members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate to support canceling all student debt and endorse the American Muslim community's call for Congress and the White House establish interest-free federal student loans.

In January 2022 USCMO joined dozens of Muslim organizations in a letter to President Biden calling on the administration to use executive action to establish long-term student debt relief by:

1. Forgiving loans for borrowers whose past payments have already exceeded the principal amount of their original loan.
2. Canceling at least \$50,000 in student debt for remaining borrowers.
3. Creating principal-only student loans (which we refer to as “principled loans”) by waiving all interest payments on current and future student loans.
4. Extending the freeze on student loan payments until at least January 1, 2023.

**REQUEST TO CONGRESS:** Without there being a single signature student loan forgiveness and reform legislative package being debated before Congress - USCMO requests that House and Senate offices consider canceling all student debt and adopt these other discussed recommendations in any future legislative reform packages or other actions.

**Note on Principled Loans:** The only foreseeable additional cost to these “principled loans” that would need to be repaid back to the federal government would be a calculated fixed, no-profit administrative fee to cover the cost of managing and processing the loan.

### REASONS TO SUPPORT:

Forgiving at least some student loan debt is one of the few popular policy ideas that President Biden could implement on his own with the stroke of a pen. A [recent national tracking poll](#) from Morning Consult and Politico found that 64% of respondents supported the idea.

Yet when the president recently announced that he is “considering dealing with some [student] debt reduction,” it was clear that he hasn’t yet recognized the urgency of this issue. President Biden’s announcement came with an immediate caveat: “I am not considering \$50,000 debt reduction,” he said in reference to last month’s proposal from Senators Chuck Schumer, Elizabeth Warren and others.

USCMO believes that President Biden has made a mistake by ruling out canceling \$50,000 of student loan debt per borrower. But even if he changes course and does so, that alone would not solve the key problem behind the student debt crisis.

In 2021, the student loan debt collectively owned by 45 million borrowers reached a [record](#) \$1.7 trillion. This number is projected to increase to \$2 trillion by 2024 and \$3 trillion by 2038. Add to this crippling debt the skyrocketing prices of housing, healthcare, food, gas and other essentials, and it’s not surprising that a quarter of borrowers are currently estimated to be in default or delinquency on their student loans.



## Congressional Fact Sheet # 3 - continue

### **JOINT HOUSE AND SENATE REQUEST: CANCELING STUDENT DEBT, ESTABLISH ZERO INTEREST FEDERAL STUDENT LOANS**

According to a Brookings Institute report, that number is expected to rise to 40% by 2023 - and that report was conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the primary reasons why student loan debt is so damaging to so many millions of Americans is the presence of interest. Interest keeps the borrower in a cascading cycle of debt, from which they are often unable to escape.

Interest on student loans is particularly predatory because it tends to target individuals who are just starting out in life. Before they are able to secure jobs and careers, millions of Americans are being saddled with debt they may never have the means to pay off.

The interest is the problem. That's why dozens of Muslim organizations have endorsed waiving all interest payments on current and future loans by establishing principal-only loans, in addition to extending the moratorium on payments until January 1 2023 and forgiving borrowers whose repayment history equals or exceeds their principal.

Implementing this proposal would not only provide much needed relief to the millions of Americans caught in the debt trap and offer borrowers an affordable way to pay back their student loans, it would also provide a boost to the economy at a time of significant inflation and instability. Broad student loan debt forgiveness would also advance racial justice, as 48% of Black students owe an average of 12.5% more than what they initially borrowed. Minority students are also more likely to default on their loans than students from other communities.

Ending interest-based debt would be a positive step toward empowering students from communities of faith. Islam, Christianity, Judaism and other religions prohibit usury as a destructive and immoral practice. This means that many students of faith are forced to either delay higher education or compromise on their values. Principal-only loans would enable them to pursue their education freely and without taking on debt that conflicts with their beliefs.

Student loan debt has been a burden and source of suffering for millions of Americans for decades. People and organizations have been calling for student loan reform for just as long, and for the first time, those in power are unable to ignore them. But President Biden will not be able to solve the crisis at hand or satisfy the demands of the American people with a half-baked approach. It's time Congress removed the burden from the backs of the American people - it's time to put an end to interest-based student loan debt.

# Congressional Fact Sheet # 4

## U.S. SENATE REQUEST: CO-SPONSOR AND MARK-UP THE COMBATING INTERNATIONAL ISLAMOPHOBIA ACT (S. 3384)

The U.S. Council of Muslim Organizations (USCMO), the largest coalition of major national, regional, and local Muslim organizations and Islamic institutions, is calling on members of the

U.S. Senate to co-sponsor Senators Cory Booker, Ben Cardin and Bernie Sanders' International Combating Islamophobia Act, which would establish a special envoy office at the U.S. State Department to monitor and combat international Islamophobia.

We are also urging all U.S. Senators to ask their colleagues in the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee to expedite the mark-up and adoption of this act.

To co-sponsor and support the legislation, please contact Senator Cory Booker's office at [samir\\_hammoud@booker.senate.gov](mailto:samir_hammoud@booker.senate.gov).

### ABOUT THE COMBATING INTERNATIONAL ISLAMOPHOBIA ACT:

The act would compel the State Department to develop a more comprehensive approach to fighting the global increase of Islamophobia, increasing its capacity to monitor and confront state and non-state actors. The two primary aims of the Combating International Islamophobia Act are:

1. Establishing an Office to Monitor and Combat Islamophobia at the State Department headed by a Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Islamophobia.
2. Amending the Foreign Assistance Act and International Religious Freedom Act to require annual reporting on Islamophobia in each foreign country and the steps taken by that country to combat it through educational programming and public awareness initiatives.

### REASONS TO SUPPORT THE COMBATING INTERNATIONAL ISLAMOPHOBIA ACT:

In December, U.S. House of Representatives voted 219-212 to approve Congresswomen Ilhan Omar and Jan Schakowsky's companion to the Combating International Islamophobia Act (H.R. 5665).

During the act's floor debate the Biden-Harris Administration issued a [statement of administration policy](#) that "supports passage of H.R. 5665, the Combating International Islamophobia Act."

Introduced on October 21, the act was co-sponsored by [56 Democratic members](#) of the U.S. House of Representatives, including [Congressman Gregory Meeks \(D-NY\)](#), chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Reps. Karen Bass (D-CA), Joaquin Castro (D-TX) and Albio Sires (D-NJ), who are sub-committee chairs of the Foreign Relations Committee.

In January 29, 2021 and right after the Biden-Harris inauguration, USCMO sent a [letter to the Biden Administration](#) calling on the State Department to establish the special envoy position.

The United States currently monitors and combats religious persecution internationally. The Combating International Islamophobia Act would extend this mission to Islamophobia. The act would also provide valuable information for understanding Islamophobia as a global phenomenon and give the U.S. a new tool to combat it.

## Congressional Fact Sheet # 4 - continue

### U.S. SENATE REQUEST: CO-SPONSOR AND MARK-UP THE COMBATING INTERNATIONAL ISLAMOPHOBIA ACT (S. 3384)

While global Islamophobia, anti-Muslim state policies and hate incidents have increased, for the past two decades the American Muslim community has consistently called for the creation of a special envoy position to monitor and combat this rising tide of hate – the Combating International Islamophobia Act would make this special envoy position a reality.

In its 2021 annual report, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) identified three Countries of Particular Concern primarily for their treatment of Muslims.

Several additional countries listed by USCIRF were identified as having patterns of mistreatment and human rights violations against either their entire Muslim populations or particular sects of Muslims. This includes several Muslim-majority countries.

State acts of persecution and violence against Muslims can be found in India and Burma – in addition to China, which the United States recognized as committing a genocide and crimes against humanity against Uyghur Muslims and other Turkic minority groups living in the country's Uyghur region.

Anti-Muslim rhetoric, bigotry and acts of violence also go together with the rise of political parties that outwardly attack the rights of Muslims, especially in France and other parts of Europe.

Transnational white supremacist and Islamophobic hate group networks have also inspired their followers to commit acts of anti-Muslim violence and terrorism, including but not limited to the tragic summer 2021 murder of a Muslim family in London, Ontario and the 2019 Christchurch, New Zealand mosque shootings.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Wrapping Up the Meeting

**Thank** the legislator and/or staff for the visit.

**Get contact information** of the staff present for the meeting.

**Make sure to follow-up** on any requests made by staff. Relate all requests to USCMO, so they can be immediately responded to.

**Complete the meeting report form** on your app.



# How a Bill Becomes Law

---

## **A. Legislation is Introduced**

- Any member can introduce a piece of legislation

### **House**

- Legislation is handed to the clerk of the House or placed in the hopper.

### **Senate**

- Members must gain recognition of the presiding officer to announce the introduction of a bill during the morning hour. If any senator objects, the introduction of the bill is postponed until the next day.

## **B. Committee Action**

- The bill is referred to the appropriate committee by the Speaker of the House or the presiding officer in the Senate. Most often, the actual referral decision is made by the House or Senate parliamentarian. Bills may be referred to more than one committee and it may be split so that parts are sent to different committees. The Speaker of the House may set time limits on committees. Bills are placed on the calendar of the committee to which they have been assigned. Failure to act on a bill is equivalent to killing it. Bills in the House can only be released from committee without a proper committee vote by a discharge petition signed by a majority of the House membership (218 members).

### **Steps in Committee:**

Comments about the bill's merit are requested by government agencies.

Bill can be assigned to subcommittee by Chairman.

Hearings may be held.

Subcommittees report their findings to the full committee.

Finally there is a vote by the full committee - the bill is "ordered to be reported."

A committee will hold a "mark-up" session during which it will make revisions and additions. If substantial amendments are made, the committee can order the introduction of a "clean bill" which will include the proposed amendments. This new bill will have a new number and will be sent to the floor while the old bill is discarded. The chamber must approve, change or reject all committee amendments before conducting a final passage vote.

In the House, most bills go to the Rules committee before reaching the floor. The committee adopts rules that will govern the procedures under which the bill will be considered by the House. A "closed rule" sets strict time limits on debate and forbids the introduction of amendments. These rules can have a major impact on whether the bill passes. The rules committee can be bypassed in three ways:

Members can move rules to be suspended (requires 2/3 vote)

A discharge petition can be filed

The House can use a Calendar Wednesday procedure.

## **C. Floor Action**

Legislation is placed on the Calendar

House: Bills are placed on one of four House Calendars. The Speaker of the House and the Majority

Leader decide what will reach the floor and when. (Legislation can also be brought to the floor by a discharge petition.)

Senate: Legislation is placed on the Legislative Calendar. There is also an Executive calendar to deal with treaties and nominations. Scheduling of legislation is the job of the Majority Leader. Bills can be brought to the floor whenever a majority of the Senate chooses.

### **Debate**

House: Debate is limited by the rules formulated in the Rules Committee. The Committee of the Whole debates and amends the bill but cannot technically pass it. Debate is guided by the Sponsoring Committee and time is divided equally between proponents and opponents. The Committee decides how much time to allot to each person. Amendments must be germane to the subject of a bill - no riders are allowed. The bill is reported back to the House (to itself) and is voted on. A quorum call is a vote to make sure that there are enough members present (218) to have a final vote. If there is not a quorum, the House will adjourn or will send the Sergeant at Arms out to round up missing members.

Senate: debate is unlimited unless cloture is invoked. Members can speak as long as they want and amendments need not be germane - riders are often offered. Entire bills can therefore be offered as amendments to other bills. Unless cloture is invoked, Senators can use a filibuster to defeat a measure by "talking it to death."

Vote - the bill is voted on. If passed, it is then sent to the other chamber unless that chamber already has a similar measure under consideration. If either chamber does not pass the bill then it dies. If the House and Senate pass the same bill then it is sent to the President. If the House and Senate pass different bills they are sent to Conference Committee. Most major legislation goes to a Conference Committee.

### **D. Conference Committee**

Members from each house form a conference committee and meet to work out the differences. The committee is usually made up of senior members who are appointed by the presiding officers of the committee that originally dealt with the bill. The representatives from each house work to maintain their version of the bill.

If the Conference Committee reaches a compromise, it prepares a written conference report, which is submitted to each chamber.

The conference report must be approved by both the House and the Senate.

### **E. The President**

The bill is sent to the President for review.

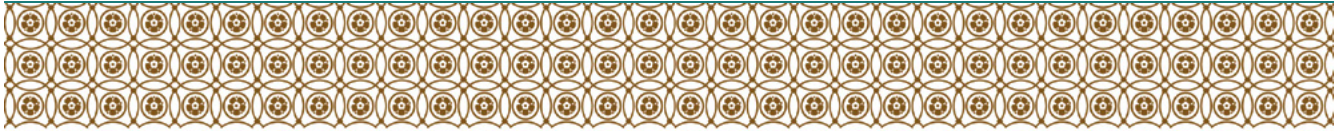
A bill becomes law if signed by the President or if not signed within 10 days and Congress is in session.

If Congress adjourns before the 10 days and the President has not signed the bill then it does not become law ("Pocket Veto.")

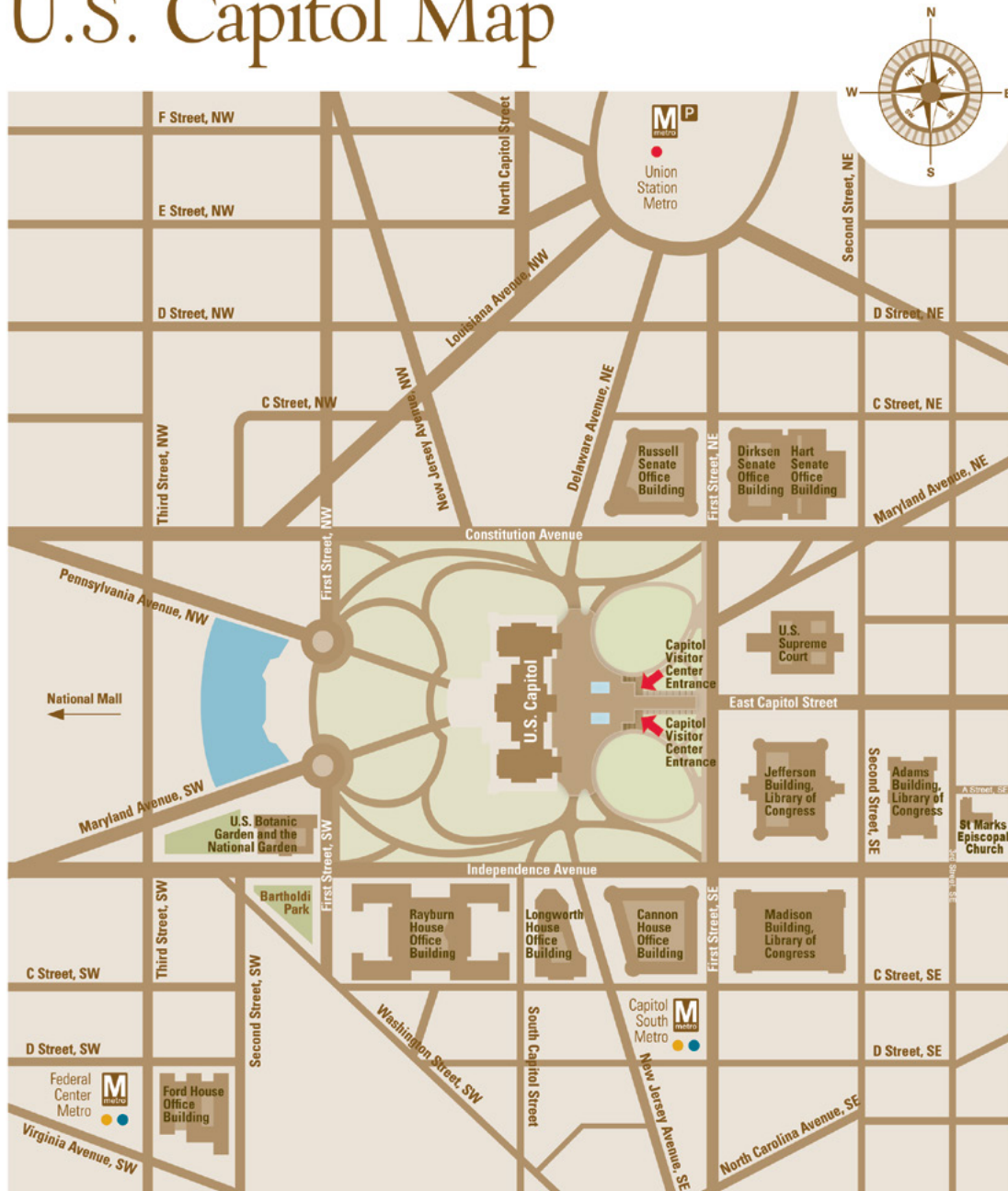
If the President vetoes the bill it is sent back to Congress with a note listing his/her reasons. The chamber that originated the legislation can attempt to override the veto by a vote of two-thirds of those present. If the veto of the bill is overridden in both chambers then it becomes law.

### **F. The Bill Becomes A Law**

Once a bill is signed by the President or his veto is overridden by both houses it becomes a law and is assigned an official number.



# U.S. Capitol Map



U.S. CAPITOL  
Visitor Center

[www.visitthecapitol.gov](http://www.visitthecapitol.gov)



## GUIDED TOURS OF THE CAPITOL

Tours are free, but tour passes are required.

8:45 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., Monday – Saturday

Tours may be booked in advance online at [www.visitthecapitol.gov](http://www.visitthecapitol.gov), through the offices of your Senators or Representative, or through the Office of Visitor Services by calling 202.226.8000.

A limited number of same-day passes are available. Inquire at the Information Desks in Emancipation Hall on the lower level of the Visitor Center.

## LOCATION & HOURS

The Capitol Visitor Center, the main entrance to the U.S. Capitol, is located below the East Plaza of the Capitol between Constitution and Independence Avenues.

**Visitors:** The Visitor Center is open to the public from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Saturday. It is closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and Inauguration Day.

**Official Business:** Visitors with official business appointments may enter the Visitor Center as early as 7:15 a.m.

## SAFETY & SECURITY

Before entering the Capitol Visitor Center, all visitors are screened by a magnetometer and all items that are permitted inside the building are screened by an x-ray device. The following items are strictly prohibited:

- Liquid, including water
- Food or beverages of any kind, including fruit and unopened packaged food
- Aerosol containers
- Non-aerosol spray (Prescriptions for medical needs are permitted.)
- Any pointed object, e.g. knitting needles and letter openers (Pens and pencils are permitted.)
- Any bag larger than 18" wide x 14" high x 8.5" deep
- Electric stun guns, martial arts weapons or devices
- Guns, replica guns, ammunition, and fireworks
- Knives of any size
- Mace and pepper spray
- Razors and box cutters

*Please note that the U.S. Capitol Police are authorized to make exceptions if a prohibited item is determined to be necessary and required to serve child care, medical or other special needs.*

## VISITORS WITH DISABILITIES

Visitors may request wheelchairs from Capitol Visitor Center staff wearing red vests or at one of the Coat Check stations just inside the main entrance.

Sign-language interpreting for tours is available when booked in advance. Listening devices with audio description of the films and exhibition are available at the Information Desks. All films have open captioning.

The Office of Congressional Accessibility Services may be reached at 202.224.4048 (voice) or 202.224.4049 (TTY).







# BRINGING AMERICAN MUSLIM ORGANIZATIONS TOGETHER

## Sponsors



US Council of Muslim Organizations  
700 12th Street, NW, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20005

### CONTACT INFO

(202) 683-6557  
Info@uscmo.org  
www.uscmo.org



VISIT US