



October 22, 2018

Ronna McDaniel

Chairwoman
Republican National Committee
310 First Street SE
Washington, DC 20003

Rep. Steve Stivers

Chairman
National Republican Congressional Committee
320 First St SE
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Chairwoman McDaniel and Chairman Stivers,

We at the Arab American Institute (AAI) are committed to non-partisan advocacy on behalf of our community, and have consistently challenged discriminatory or divisive rhetoric on both sides of the aisle. Over the past few weeks, we have become troubled by the open bigotry that Republican Duncan Hunter's campaign has engaged in against Arab American challenger Ammar Campa-Najjar for California's 50th district seat. Hunter has accused his opponent of belonging to a plot by "radical Muslims... trying to infiltrate the U.S. government." This is not only a transparent lie, it is a dangerous lie that stokes hatred during a volatile period in our political culture. Time and again, we have seen an uptick in hate crimes invariably follows bigoted political rhetoric, so this matter cannot be taken lightly.

Hunter's comments were not an off-the-cuff slip, they reflect the bigotry and mendacity of his approved campaign ads, the latest of which accuses Campa-Najjar (an American of mixed Arab and Mexican descent who is Christian) of changing his name to "hide his family's ties to terrorism." The *Washington Post's* fact-checkers gave Hunter's ad four Pinocchios, the worst possible rating, for its total dishonesty. The *Post* also accused the ad of using "naked anti-Muslim bias in an effort to scare Californians into voting for an indicted Republican incumbent."

Hunter's tactics against his opponent are deplorable, but they are not entirely surprising, given the success of other candidates who opportunistically stoked passions against minorities and portrayed them as a threat, including President Trump during his presidential campaign. But what has been exceptionally disappointing is the silence of the Republican leadership, which once stood up in the honored tradition of Abraham Lincoln against the politics of division.

When Republican Congressman Randy “Duke” Cunningham attacked his Egyptian-born opponent Joseph Ghougassian in 1990 with anti-Arab imagery, then-Chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee Edward J. Rollins wrote that he was “appalled” by the attack, adding that “campaign smears that attack someone because of their racial, ethnic or religious background are outrageous, unacceptable, and have no place in the party of Lincoln.” When Barack Obama was accused of being a secret “Arab” and “Muslim,” Republican leaders of conscience, from the late John McCain to Colin Powell, corrected the record and then made clear that being Arab or Muslim is not grounds for baseless attacks, but rather the ethnicity or faith of millions of proud Americans.

The contemptible behavior of Duncan Hunter calls on the Republican Party to, once again, take a stand against bigotry and division. We urge you to speak up, and to reaffirm the values the Republican Party must stand for. We thank you for your consideration, and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



George Salem
Chairman



James Zogby
President