Arab Americans, like the rest of our fellow citizens, will go to the polls this November to cast votes in an election that will help define the future direction of our country. The 2010 midterm contests are occurring against the backdrop of issues that will be uppermost on the minds of most voters – continued economic distress and uncertainty at home and unresolved conflicts across the Middle East.

But for Arab Americans, especially those who are Muslim, there is an additional issue in play this election season. Some Americans must now contend with a poisonous political environment being created by a campaign that began against a planned Muslim community center in lower Manhattan and has accelerated into an assault against the religion of millions of our fellow citizens. Having experienced discrimination, racial profiling, and political exclusion in the past, Arab Americans of all faiths are concerned by this bigotry and are aware of the dangers such an unchecked campaign can pose to them and to non-Arab Muslims. We know the consequences all too well – and that is why we are responding.

The hateful targeting of any group as part of a policy debate must end. It must end because of the way it informs the people in the Middle East and the Muslim World. And it must end because it contributes to a politics that excludes Arab Americans and American Muslims here at home.

One of the ways we are fighting intolerance is to hold public officials accountable for the words they use. This scorecard examines the statements made by policy makers and candidates as they addressed the Islamic center issue. Though not comprehensive, and though no official can be judged fairly by any single action or statement, we hope it will provide a useful look at the debate and its participants.

**RATING SCALE:**

- Defended the construction of the Muslim community center in lower Manhattan
- Did not oppose the construction of the Muslim community center in lower Manhattan
- Opposed the construction of the Muslim community center in lower Manhattan
- Expressed anti-Muslim sentiment in opposing the construction of the Muslim community center
  *This includes individuals who imply that those behind Park51 are pro-terrorist extremists*

The scoring is color-coded:

- Red for Republicans
- Blue for Democrats
- Gray for Independents
President Barack Obama

Statement Excerpt:
“As a citizen, and as president, I believe that Muslims have the same right to practice their religion as everyone else in this country. And that includes the right to build a place of worship and a community center on private property in Lower Manhattan, in accordance with local laws and ordinances. This is America. And our commitment to religious freedom must be unshakable. The principle that people of all faiths are welcome in this country and that they will not be treated differently by their government is essential to who we are. The writ of the Founders must endure. We must never forget those who we lost so tragically on 9/11, and we must always honor those who led the response to that attack -- from the firefighters who charged up smoke-filled staircases, to our troops who are serving in Afghanistan today. And let us also remember who we’re fighting against, and what we’re fighting for. Our enemies respect no religious freedom. Al-Qaeda’s cause is not Islam -- it’s a gross distortion of Islam. These are not religious leaders -- they’re terrorists who murder innocent men and women and children. In fact, al-Qaeda has killed more Muslims than people of any other religion -- and that list of victims includes innocent Muslims who were killed on 9/11.”

“I was not commenting and I will not comment on the wisdom of making a decision to put a mosque there.”

“This country stands for the proposition that all men and women are created equal; that they have certain unalienable rights and one of those unalienable rights is to practice their religion freely. And what that means is that if you could build a church on a site; if you could build a synagogue on a site; if you could build a Hindu temple on a site, then you should be able to build a mosque on the site.”

Former Alaska Governor & Republican Vice Presidential Candidate Sarah Palin

Statement Excerpt:
“Ground Zero Mosque supporters: doesn’t it stab you in the heart, as it does ours throughout the heartland? Peaceful Muslims, pls refudiate.”

“People have a constitutional right to burn a Koran if they want to, but doing so is insensitive and an unnecessary provocation – much like building a mosque at Ground Zero.”

Former NYC Mayor & Republican Presidential Candidate Rudy Giuliani

Statement Excerpt:
It would be a “desecration” of ground zero for the project to go forward.

In response to legality of project, he said “I agree with all that. And beyond that it's an act of right project as far as I can tell under New York law. They never even had to go through all the reviews they went through. The question here is a question of sensitivity: people's feelings. And, are you really what you pretend to be? ... I mean all this is doing is creating more division, more anger, more hatred.” … “If you are a healer, you do not go forward with this project. If you’re a warrior, you do.”
**Former DNC Chair and Presidential Candidate Howard Dean**

**Statement Excerpt:**

Building the center there would be “a real affront to people who lost their lives, including Muslims. That site doesn’t belong to any particular religion, it belongs to all Americans and all faiths. So I think a good reasonable compromise could be worked out without violating the principle that people ought to be able to worship as they see fit... I think another site would be a better idea... I believe that the people who are trying to build the mosque are trying to do something that’s good. But there’s no point in starting off trying to do something that’s good if it’s going to meet with an enormous resistance from a lot of folks. This is a very delicate, difficult religious and cultural issue.”

**Former House Speaker and Prospective Republican Presidential Candidate Newt Gingrich**

**Statement Excerpt:**

“There should be no mosque near Ground Zero in New York so long as there are no churches or synagogues in Saudi Arabia.”

“The true intentions of Rauf are also revealed by the name initially proposed for the Ground Zero mosque—’Cordoba House’—which is named for a city in Spain where a conquering Muslim army replaced a church with a mosque. This name is a very direct historical indication that the Ground Zero mosque is all about conquest and thus an assertion of Islamist triumphalism which we should not tolerate.”

Building an Islamic center near Ground Zero would be “would be like putting a Nazi sign next to the Holocaust Museum.”

**DNC Chairman Tim Kaine**

**Statement Excerpt:**

“To me, it seems like an issue that will be of concern for a short time. But I don’t think this is going to be a long-lasting issue... I think Americans understand why the First Amendment was put first... If it wouldn’t be controversial because it was a synagogue or church, we can’t hold a Muslim place of worship to a different standard... It’s an example of a basic principle that makes us proud to be Americans.”

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12. [St. Louis Today](http://www.stltoday.com) (August 20, 2010)
SENATORS AND SENATE CANDIDATES:

Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO)

Statement Excerpt:
Campaign Statement: “Freedom of religion is one of the most cherished traditions in our Constitution and our history. Michael believes this is a decision for New Yorkers to make and hopes a site can be chosen that alleviates the current tensions and is sensitive to the memory of September 11th.”  

R-CO Candidate for Senate Ken Buck

Statement Excerpt:
Campaign Statement: “Ken believes the site at ground zero should be a place that brings Americans together. While they have the legal right to build the mosque, the proposed location has become a dividing point. The group seeking to build the mosque and community center, should find a different location.”

D-FL Candidate for Senate Jeff Greene

Statement Excerpt:
“It tells you that [the President] has this all wrong and I strongly oppose his support for building a mosque near Ground Zero.”

IN-FL Candidate for Senate Charlie Crist

Statement Excerpt:
“We are a country in my view that stands for freedom of religion. You know, respect for others. I know there are sensitivities and I understand that, but I think Mayor Bloomberg is right and I think the President is right.”

Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL)

Statement Excerpt:
“I had my differences with President George W. Bush, but I believe he showed real leadership after 9-11, when, in the agony and anger that followed, he made it clear that our war was with the terrorists who perverted the teachings of Islam, not with Muslims who were faithful to what he called ‘a peaceful religion, a religion that respects others.’ Those who seek to exploit the location of an Islamic Center in New York have forgotten the words of President Bush.

“They have also forgotten one of the most fundamental American and constitutional values: our freedom to practice our religion. As President Obama has said, ‘Muslims have the same right to practice their religion as everyone else in this country and that includes the right to build a place of worship and a community center on private property in Lower Manhattan, in accordance with local laws and ordinances.’

“The mayor of New York City, Michael Bloomberg, has given his assent to this center and I support his decision. The politicians like Newt Gingrich and Sarah Palin who try to divide America with fear and hate over this issue betray the diversity which makes our nation great and the Constitution which they profess to honor. If the freedoms we hold dear and the values which our brave military fights every day to defend are truly in our hearts, we need to speak out against those who divide us and those who attack patriotic and peace-loving Muslim Americans.”

D-IL Candidate for Senate Alexi Giannoulias

Statement Excerpt:
“Are we going to talk about tolerance, talk about freedom of religion or are we actually going to practice it?” 18

R-IL Candidate for Senate Mark Kirk

Statement Excerpt:
The proposed mosque site would cause “undue pain to families of the 9/11 victims.” 19

D-KY Candidate for Senate Jack Conway

Statement Excerpt:
“I think we have to keep the families of the victims of 9/11 foremost in our minds and because of that I would prefer to see it located elsewhere.” 20

Senator David Vitter (R-LA)

Statement Excerpt:
“Obama’s support of building the mosque at Ground Zero is a slap in the face to the American people and I’ve demanded that President Obama reverse his position… it is ridiculous that my opponent, Charlie Melancon, refuses to join me in calling on Obama to reverse his support.” 21

D-LA Candidate for Senate Charlie Melancon

Statement Excerpt:
“I support freedom of religion, but let’s give the families of 9/11 victims a voice about where this mosque should be placed because putting one near ground zero isn’t appropriate.” 22

Senator Al Franken (D-MN)

Statement Excerpt:
Right-wing opposition to the center is “one of the most disgraceful things that I’ve heard… I don’t know how many of you have been to New York, but if a building is two blocks away from anything, you can’t see it. It’s a community center. They’re going to have a gym. They’re going to have point guards. Muslim point guards… They [Republicans] do this every two years. They try to find a wedge issue, and they try to work it.” 23

Senator Claire McCaskill (D-MO)

Statement Excerpt:
“I understand why this location has offended some people. I believe the religious freedom guaranteed in the United States Constitution must be respected.” 24

Senator Christopher Bond (R-MO)

Statement Excerpt:
“Sometimes, having the right to do something does not mean it is the right thing to do.” 25

R-MO Candidate for Bond’s seat Roy Blunt

Statement Excerpt:
“We constantly talk about what’s appropriate to put next to a 150-year-old Civil War battlefield… I think it’s totally appropriate to talk about what should be near ground zero from 9/11… I do not think it should be built there.” 26

D-MO Candidate for Bond’s seat Robin Carnahan

Statement Excerpt:
“Just because you can build it – and they can – doesn’t mean they should.” 27

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV)

Statement Excerpt:
[Through Spokesperson] “The First Amendment protects freedom of religion. Senator Reid respects that but thinks that the mosque should be built some place else.” 28

Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ)

Statement Excerpt:
“I think it’s incredibly dangerous for [the GOP] to move down this path and it undermines a lot of their other arguments about the Constitution and the preservation of the Constitution and the importance of the Constitution and all of the rights that are derived from it… I don’t think it will be a successful bludgeon. I think people are riveted on their economic challenges and our job is to remind them who drove them into this incredibly deep ditch and who’s trying to get them out of it, which is us.” 29

Senator Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY)

Statement Excerpt:
[Through Spokesperson] “The community board, which includes many people who lived through the 9/11 attacks, overwhelmingly voted to approve this proposal and Senator Gillibrand supports the board’s decision.” 30

Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH)

**Statement Excerpt:**

[Through Spokesperson] “He believes that political operatives who seek to divide the country with this issue and others are attempting to distract from our most important priority - creating jobs and getting the economy back on track” 31

R-OH Candidate for Senate Rob Portman

**Statement Excerpt:**

“I think building a mosque at this site is the wrong thing to do...It is disrespectful to the families who have lost loved ones on 9/11 to build a mosque on that sacred ground.” 32

D-OH Candidate for Senate Lee Fisher

**Statement Excerpt:**

“Given the horrific nature of the 9/11 attacks, I believe this is an issue that should be decided by the people of New York. But let me be clear - we must continue to protect the Constitutional right to religious freedom that makes America a great nation and a beacon to the rest of the world.” 33

Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR)

**Statement Excerpt:**

“Many mosque opponents argue, just because it can be built does not mean it should be. They say it would be disrespectful to the memories of those who died on 9/11 to build a Muslim facility near the World Trade Center site. I appreciate the depth of emotions at play, but respectfully suggest that the presence of a mosque is only inappropriate near ground zero if we unfairly associate Muslim Americans with the atrocities of the foreign al-Qaeda terrorists who attacked our nation.

“Such an association is a profound error. Muslim Americans are our fellow citizens, not our enemies. Muslim Americans were among the victims who died at the World Trade Center in the 9/11 attacks. Muslim American first responders risked their lives to save their fellow citizens that day...

“Some have also argued that the construction of the mosque would hand a propaganda victory to Osama bin Laden. I think the opposite is true. Al-Qaeda justifies its murder by painting America as a nation at war with Islam. Celebrating our freedom of religion and Muslim Americans’ place in our communities is a blow to al-Qaeda’s ideology of hate and division. We strengthen America by distinguishing, clearly and unequivocally, between our al-Qaeda enemy and our Muslim neighbors...

“I have great respect for the sentiments of the survivors and family members of those who died on 9/11, and understand that some may not regard the situation this way. But our fundamental religious freedom and our national security -- in addition to fairness for our fellow citizens -- will be well served by drawing a bright line between our Muslim friends and neighbors at home, and our al-Qaeda enemy abroad.” 34

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Senator Jack Reed (D-RI)

Statement Excerpt:
“I think [the President] felt he had to… reinforce the fact that he was speaking about basic principles. I think he emphasized it appropriately.”  

Senator John Coryn (R-TX)

Statement Excerpt:
“It’s nice that folks on the left now are sensitive to the importance of freedom of religion. I think we all should be… But I do think it’s unwise… to build a mosque at the site where 3,000 Americans lost their lives as a result of a terrorist attack. And I think, to me, it demonstrates that – that Washington, the White House, the administration, and the President himself seems to be disconnected from the mainstream of America. And I think that’s one of the reasons people are so frustrated.”

R-UT Candidate for Senate Mike Lee

Statement Excerpt:
“It’s right across the street from a place where thousands of people died as a result of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and being built under leadership of an imam … who has gone on record saying the United States was an accomplice to the crime. I am certainly sympathetic to those who say this is a poke in the eye of those who suffered on 9/11, of the victims on 9/11.”

Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT)

Statement Excerpt:
“It may be popular to jump on this, but it should never be popular to have our First Amendment freedom of religion apply to some religions and not others. That’s not the American way.”

Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI)

Statement Excerpt:
“In the end I believe in freedom of religion. If somebody owns property and it’s within the zoning rules, if they want to build a house of worship that is a fundamental right. And I would make the point I am for freedom on this point, and freedom of religion is fundamental.” He called opposition to the center as “one of the worst things I’ve ever seen done in politics.”

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**HOUSE MEMBERS AND CANDIDATES:**

**Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)**

*Statement Excerpt:*

“The freedom of religion is a Constitutional right. Where a place of worship is located is a local decision. I support the statement made by the Interfaith Alliance that ‘We agree with the ADL that there is a need for transparency about who is funding the effort to build this Islamic center. At the same time, we should also ask who is funding the attacks against the construction of the center.’” 40

**Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA)**

*Statement Excerpt:*

“Why is [the President] so insensitive about this area, as well, to engage in a local issue that’s causing a problem throughout the nation, when the nation feels the sensitivity and a deep sensitivity to this exact location?” 41

**Rep. Jerry Costello (D-IL)**

*Statement Excerpt:*

“I certainly believe in religious freedom, but this project is simply too controversial and divisive to achieve its stated goal of rebuilding community and understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims.” 42

**Rep. John Shimkus (R-IL)**

*Statement Excerpt:*

“New York Gov. (David) Paterson got this right. He offered state property at another location in the city. It is insensitive and disrespectful to locate a mosque/Islamic center at a site that was damaged on 9/11.” 43

**Rep. Andre Carson (D-IN)**

*Statement Excerpt:*

“Are we a country of laws and principles? Or are we a country who will be moved by the winds of emotion each and every time there are issues that come up to divert us from the true meaning and intent of the founding fathers?” 44

**Rep. Geoff Davis (R-KY)**

*Statement Excerpt:*

“I have great respect for Middle Eastern culture. However, plans to construct a mosque near the Ground Zero memorial site, where thousands of Americans lost their lives due to a radical Islamic terrorist group attack, is not only insensitive but provocative” 45

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Rep. Frank Kratovil (D-MD)

**Statement Excerpt:**
“It seems to me those are issues related to local zoning laws and so forth, and that's a decision that they're going to have to make.” 46

R-MD Candidate for Kratovil's seat Andy Harris

**Statement Excerpt:**
[On his opponent] “He is thinking like a lawyer and not like an American, making declarations without America’s best interest in mind.” 47

Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MN)

**Statement Excerpt:**
“[T]here’s also a more important principle at work here: And that is that the transnational terrorists who committed this outrageous act on 9/11, they are arguing that America is at war with Islam… The way to undermine and counteract that false narrative is to stand on our sacredly held beliefs of religious liberty. That's how we demonstrate that, no, America is a country...for everyone where people worship as they see fit. The problem with stopping this Islamic center is that it implies that the Muslim world is responsible for it, when it was al Qaeda that was responsible.” 48

Rep. Todd Akin (R-MO)

**Statement Excerpt:**
“We have religious freedom and freedom of speech, but often it is constrained within the limits of common sense. Building the mosque near ground zero is an incendiary idea.” 49

Rep. Russ Carnahan (D-MO)

**Statement Excerpt:**
“When Bosnians in south St. Louis County sought to build a mosque a few years ago, the community refused to let it become a political football, and at the end of the day, the entire community—Christians, Jews and Muslims—came together to find compromise. While it clearly wasn’t as sensitive as this situation, I think the lesson applies. We should leave the politics out of this so that the people of New York can find a resolution that is right for their community.” 50

R-MO Candidate for Carnahan’s seat Ed Martin

**Statement Excerpt:**
“Those who seek to erect a victory monument in New York where our fellow citizens were immolated and crushed by a profoundly wicked strain of Islam do not deserve the cloak of religious freedom that our peaceful Muslim neighbors enjoy and to which they are entitled. I absolutely oppose the so-called mosque at ground zero and believe those who are patting themselves on the back as paragons of religious liberty are either deeply naive or incredibly cynical.” 51

Rep. Blaine Lutkemeyer (R-MO) 

*Statement Excerpt:*

“At the end of the day, they have a right to build the mosque wherever they want to. But they have a responsibility to do it in a way that it [sic] is appropriate. They are not exercising responsibility with regard to the sensitivity of the area and the area’s historical importance. They are trying to be confrontational.”  

Rep. Shelly Berkley (D-NV) 

*Statement Excerpt:*

“Given the fact that my family and people in my religion have suffered so much from religious persecution, I cannot see how I can speak out against other minority religions in this country and their free exercise of their own religion... Do I feel sensitivity for those families that suffered horrible losses and unspeakable crimes (in the Sept. 11 attack)? Of course! Is this the best location on the planet for this mosque? Probably not. But doesn’t the Constitution permit the free exercise of religious beliefs? How many synagogues have been burned to the ground with Jews in them because of religious intolerance?”  

Rep. Charlie Rangel (D-NY) 

*Statement Excerpt:*

“Kind of proud that they’re sticking to their guns and saying this is where they would want to worship.”  

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) 

*Statement Excerpt:*

“As an elected official who believes strongly in the separation of church and state, I contend that the government has no business deciding whether there should or should not be a Muslim house of worship near Ground Zero. And, as a representative of New Yorkers of all faiths and cultures, I find the singling out of Muslim-Americans -- because of their faith -- for animus and hate to be shameful and divisive. We should instead work toward building tolerance and understanding. For centuries, New Yorkers have exhibited a great capacity to incorporate and benefit from diversity. The Cordoba House, which is the product of moderate Muslims, has the support of the local community board and a wide swath of Lower Manhattan community leaders.”  

Rep. Tim Bishop (D-NY) 

*Statement Excerpt:*

“As a New Yorker, I believe ground zero is sacred ground and should unite us. If the group seeking to build the mosque is sincere in its efforts to bring people together, I would urge them to seek an alternative location which is less divisive. I dispute the wisdom of building at that location, not the constitutional right.”

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Rep. Michael McMahon (D-NY)

Statement Excerpt:
“Muslim Americans deserve the right to practice their faith - as we all do. I believe a new location is the right compromise so that Muslim Americans can worship without eliciting feelings that push us away from our Country’s basic tenet of religious acceptance while the families of 9/11 victims obtain the peace of mind they deserve.” 57

Rep. Peter King (R-NY)

Statement Excerpt:
“When they tell us that the funding for the project is going to be fine but they won’t tell us what it is, they also told us that they owned the property but they didn’t. To me it’s just another question that goes to their credibility, goes to their integrity and goes to the whole issue of what else they could be hiding.” 58

Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY)

Statement Excerpt:
“While they have a constitutional right to build the mosque, it would be better if they had demonstrated more sensitivity to the families of 9/11 victims. I urge them to do so before proceeding further.” 59

Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY)

Statement Excerpt:
“While I understand some of the strong emotions this proposal has created, I believe that preventing the project from being built would run counter to our proud constitutional rights of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom to assemble. I stand with many in our community, including Mayor Bloomberg and the local community board, in supporting the rights of the project’s planners to build in lower Manhattan, which I believe will signal to the world that the terrorists will never be able to destroy the American traditions of openness and tolerance.” 60

Rep. Anthony Weiner (D-NY)

Statement Excerpt:
Letter to Bloomberg: “I honor you for your powerful statement about the proposed cultural center with a Mosque in lower Manhattan. Your Remarks on Tuesday put this controversial issue into context. I feel strongly that the constitutional protection of Religion from the overreach of government means that elected officials should endeavor to stay out of the business of deciding where houses of worship may or may not be. I share your sensitivity and concern for the feelings of the families of the victims of the attacks of 9/11 and many New Yorkers for whom the scars of that day are still fresh. I hope that as this issue is considered going forward, there is a process where those other great hallmarks of democracy are respected – transparency and tolerance of all viewpoints. That process can allow fair questions to be raised.” 61

Rep. Michael Arcuri (D-NY)

Statement Excerpt:
“The pain felt by many Americans from the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks is still very real, and I can understand how the thought of building a mosque near Ground Zero could reopen those wounds. For the sake of the victims and their families, I think another location should be chosen.”

R-NY Candidate for Arcuri’s seat Richard Hanna (Before Arcuri Opposition)

Statement Excerpt:
“It’s extremely easy to understand why people are upset by this, but this country was founded by people who were running away from religious persecution.”

R-NY Candidate Richard Hanna (After Arcuri Opposition)

Statement Excerpt:
“As I said in previous statements, they have a constitutional right to build this, but with rights come responsibilities… This is the wrong location. Building a mosque near Ground Zero is insensitive, an affront to the victims of 9/11, and it lacks respect for the general public’s feelings.”

R-NC Candidate for Bob Etheridge’s seat Renee Ellmers

Statement Excerpt:
“The President is wrong. His support for building a mosque at Ground Zero will be seen by our enemies as a sign of weakness. He should simply have told the mosque-builders, No, you’re wrong. And stopped it.”

Rep. Steve Driehaus (D-OH)

Statement Excerpt:
“It’s easy to defend the Constitution when it’s popular … but we take an oath to uphold the Constitution even when it’s unpopular… No one in Cincinnati is asking me about a mosque in New York.”

R-OH Candidate for Driehaus’s seat Steve Chabot

Statement Excerpt:
“We can all agree that the freedom to practice religion as one sees fit is a cornerstone principle guiding our country. However, the construction of a mosque near Ground Zero should not and must not happen… Above all, we must continue to show respect for those who lost their lives on 9/11, and to their families, and stand firm in our commitment to honor their sacrifice.”

Rep. John Boehner (R-OH)

Statement Excerpt:
“The American people certainly don’t support it... The fact that someone has the right to do something doesn’t necessarily make it the right thing to do ... This is not an issue of law, whether religious freedom or local zoning. This is a basic issue of respect for a tragic moment in our history.” 68

“To Pastor Jones and those who want to build the mosque: Just because you have a right to do something in America doesn’t mean it is the right thing to do” 69

D-OH Candidate for Boehner’s seat Justin Coussoule

Statement Excerpt:
“In all these years, no one has ever bothered to complain about the reading of the Koran inside the Pentagon... If this is all about disrespecting those who died at the hands of terrorists, do those same people not know what happens in D.C.? Or is it more about getting media attention?” 70

R-OH Candidate for Boccieri’s seat James Renacci

Statement Excerpt:
“It is very troubling to see President Obama again turning a deaf ear to the thoughts and concerns of a majority of Americans.” 71

Rep. Joe Sestak (D-PA)

Statement Excerpt:
“As you know, I haven’t taken very good direction yet from party leadership. All that said, I strongly believe in the constitutional right of religious freedom and in the separation of church and state applying equally to everyone. Those are rights that I defended for 31 years in that fine U.S. Navy. This is an issue for New York to resolve as long as it respects those constitutional rights. ... Let’s also step back and say, ‘Let’s stop playing politics with religion.’” 72

Rep. Kathy Dahlkemper (D-PA)

Statement Excerpt:
“While I understand that emotions are running strong in regard to the Muslim community center in New York City, it’s neither the government’s nor an elected official’s place to tell any religious group where they can or cannot practice their faith... Our Founding Fathers came to America to escape religious persecution. I believe very strongly in the First Amendment’s guarantee of religious freedom, and I will not throw our Constitution or core values aside simply because it is an election year.” 73

Rep. Patrick Murphy (D-PA)

Statement Excerpt:
“Those wishing to build this center have a chance to promote healing and good will between people of different faiths if they choose another site.” 74

http://nky.cincinnati.com (August 17, 2010)
Rep. Charlie Dent (R-PA)

Statement Excerpt:
“I’m more concerned for the victims of the 9/11 attacks and their families, many of whom are very upset about this decision... Out of respect, those involved should try to... not open up these wounds.” 75

R-PA Candidate for Paul Kanjorski’s (D-PA) seat Lou Barletta

Statement Excerpt:
“The selection of this site – just 2 blocks from Ground Zero – is incredibly insensitive, almost to the point of provocation.” 76

Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX)

Statement Excerpt:
“The fact that so much attention has been given the mosque debate, raises the question of just why and driven by whom? In my opinion it has come from the neo-conservatives who demand continual war in the Middle East and Central Asia and are compelled to constantly justify it. They never miss a chance to use hatred toward Muslims to rally support for the ill conceived preventative wars. A select quote from soldiers from in Afghanistan and Iraq expressing concern over the mosque is pure propaganda and an affront to their bravery and sacrifice.

“Many fellow conservatives say they understand the property rights and 1st Amendment issues and don’t want a legal ban on building the mosque. They just want everybody to be “sensitive” and force, through public pressure, cancellation of the mosque construction. This sentiment seems to confirm that Islam itself is to be made the issue, and radical religious Islamic views were the only reasons for 9/11. If it became known that 9/11 resulted in part from a desire to retaliate against what many Muslims saw as American aggression and occupation, the need to demonize Islam would be difficult if not impossible.

“The justification to ban the mosque is no more rational than banning a soccer field in the same place because all the suicide bombers loved to play soccer... The outcry over the building of the mosque, near ground zero, implies that Islam alone was responsible for the 9/11 attacks. According to those who are condemning the building of the mosque, the nineteen suicide terrorists on 9/11 spoke for all Muslims. This is like blaming all Christians for the wars of aggression and occupation because some Christians supported the neo-conservative’s aggressive wars.” 77

R-WV Candidate for Rahall’s seat Elliott Maynard

Statement Excerpt:
“Ground zero is hallowed ground to Americans... Do you think the Muslims would allow a Jewish temple or Christian church to be built in Mecca?” 78

OTHER ELECTED OFFICIALS AND CANDIDATES FOR ELECTED OFFICE:

Florida Governor Charlie Crist

Statement Excerpt:
“We are a country in my view that stands for freedom of religion. You know, respect for others. I know there are sensitivities and I understand that, but I think Mayor Bloomberg is right and I think the President is right.” 79

R-GA Candidate for Governor Nathan Deal

Statement Excerpt:
“I don’t think government officials from one place should be telling government officials from someplace else what they ought to be doing. But as an American, I am absolutely opposed. ... It keeps the wound of 9-11 alive.” 80

D-GA Candidate for Governor Roy Barnes

Statement Excerpt:
[The site in Lower Manhattan] “is hallowed ground and it is too painful and divisive to build a mosque there.” 81

Illinois Governor Pat Quinn (D)

Statement Excerpt:
“I do believe that there are special places on Earth that should have a zone of solemnity around them. I would strongly urge those who are thinking of putting a mosque within that zone to rethink their position.”

Quinn dismissed the idea that he was linking all Muslims to terrorism, saying he doesn’t believe in “guilt by association.” 82

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie (R)

Statement Excerpt:
“What offends me the most about all this is that it’s being used as a political football by both parties. And what disturbs me about the president’s remarks is that he is now using it as a political football as well... it would be wrong to so overreact to that, that we paint Islam with a brush of radical Muslim extremists that just want to kill Americans because we are Americans. But beyond that ... I am not going to get into it, because I would be guilty of candidly what I think some Republicans are guilty of, and the president is now, the president is guilty of, of playing politics with this issue, and I simply am not going to do it.” 83

NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg

Statement:

“We have come here to Governors Island to stand where the earliest settlers first set foot in New Amsterdam, and where the seeds of religious tolerance were first planted. We’ve come here to see the inspiring symbol of liberty that, more than 250 years later, would greet millions of immigrants in the harbor, and we come here to state as strongly as ever - this is the freest City in the world. That’s what makes New York special and different and strong.

“Our doors are open to everyone - everyone with a dream and a willingness to work hard and play by the rules. New York City was built by immigrants, and it is sustained by immigrants - by people from more than a hundred different countries speaking more than two hundred different languages and professing every faith. And whether your parents were born here, or you came yesterday, you are a New Yorker.

“We may not always agree with every one of our neighbors. That’s life and it’s part of living in such a diverse and dense city. But we also recognize that part of being a New Yorker is living with your neighbors in mutual respect and tolerance. It was exactly that spirit of openness and acceptance that was attacked on 9/11.

“On that day, 3,000 people were killed because some murderous fanatics didn’t want us to enjoy the freedom to profess our own faiths, to speak our own minds, to follow our own dreams and to live our own lives.

“Of all our precious freedoms, the most important may be the freedom to worship as we wish. And it is a freedom that, even here in a City that is rooted in Dutch tolerance, was hard-won over many years. In the mid-1650s, the small Jewish community living in Lower Manhattan petitioned Dutch Governor Peter Stuyvesant for the right to build a synagogue - and they were turned down.

“In 1657, when Stuyvesant also prohibited Quakers from holding meetings, a group of non-Quakers in Queens signed the Flushing Remonstrance, a petition in defense of the right of Quakers and others to freely practice their religion. It was perhaps the first formal, political petition for religious freedom in the American colonies - and the organizer was thrown in jail and then banished from New Amsterdam.

“In the 1700s, even as religious freedom took hold in America, Catholics in New York were effectively prohibited from practicing their religion - and priests could be arrested. Largely as a result, the first Catholic parish in New York City was not established until the 1780's - St. Peter's on Barclay Street, which still stands just one block north of the World Trade Center site and one block south of the proposed mosque and community center.

“This morning, the City's Landmark Preservation Commission unanimously voted not to extend landmark status to the building on Park Place where the mosque and community center are planned. The decision was based solely on the fact that there was little architectural significance to the building. But with or without landmark designation, there is nothing in the law that would prevent the owners from opening a mosque within the existing building. The simple fact is this building is private property, and the owners have a right to use the building as a house of worship.

“The government has no right whatsoever to deny that right - and if it were tried, the courts would almost certainly strike it down as a violation of the U.S. Constitution. Whatever you may think of the proposed mosque and community center, lost in the heat of the debate has been a basic question - should government attempt to deny private citizens the right to build a house of worship on private property based on their particular religion? That may happen in other countries, but we should never allow it to happen here. This nation was founded on the principle that the government must never choose between religions, or favor one over another.
“The World Trade Center Site will forever hold a special place in our City, in our hearts. But we would be untrue to the best part of ourselves - and who we are as New Yorkers and Americans - if we said ‘no’ to a mosque in Lower Manhattan.

“Let us not forget that Muslims were among those murdered on 9/11 and that our Muslim neighbors grieved with us as New Yorkers and as Americans. We would betray our values - and play into our enemies’ hands - if we were to treat Muslims differently than anyone else. In fact, to cower to popular sentiment would be to hand a victory to the terrorists - and we should not stand for that.

“For that reason, I believe that this is an important test of the separation of church and state as we may see in our lifetime - as important a test - and it is critically important that we get it right.

“On September 11, 2001, thousands of first responders heroically rushed to the scene and saved tens of thousands of lives. More than 400 of those first responders did not make it out alive. In rushing into those burning buildings, not one of them asked ‘What God do you pray to?’ ‘What beliefs do you hold?’

“The attack was an act of war - and our first responders defended not only our City but also our country and our Constitution. We do not honor their lives by denying the very Constitutional rights they died protecting. We honor their lives by defending those rights - and the freedoms that the terrorists attacked.

“Of course, it is fair to ask the organizers of the mosque to show some special sensitivity to the situation - and in fact, their plan envisions reaching beyond their walls and building an interfaith community. By doing so, it is my hope that the mosque will help to bring our City even closer together and help repudiate the false and repugnant idea that the attacks of 9/11 were in any way consistent with Islam. Muslims are as much a part of our City and our country as the people of any faith and they are as welcome to worship in Lower Manhattan as any other group. In fact, they have been worshiping at the site for the better part of a year, as is their right.

“The local community board in Lower Manhattan voted overwhelming to support the proposal and if it moves forward, I expect the community center and mosque will add to the life and vitality of the neighborhood and the entire City.

“Political controversies come and go, but our values and our traditions endure - and there is no neighborhood in this City that is off limits to God’s love and mercy, as the religious leaders here with us today can attest.”

*New Bloomberg Statement:*

“The question will then become, ‘How big should the ‘no-mosque zone’ around the World Trade Center be?’… There is already a mosque four blocks away. Should it, too, be moved? This is a test of our commitment to American values. We must have the courage of our convictions. We must do what is right, not what is easy.

“But if we say that a mosque and community center should not be built near the perimeter of the World Trade Center site, we would compromise our commitment to fighting terror with freedom.

“We would undercut the values and principles that so many heroes died protecting. We would feed the false impressions that some Americans have about Muslims. We would send a signal around the world that Muslim Americans may be equal in the eyes of the law, but separate in the eyes of their countrymen. And we would hand a valuable propaganda tool to terrorist recruiters, who spread the fallacy that America is at war with Islam.

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“Islam did not attack the World Trade Center -- Al-Qaeda did. To implicate all of Islam for the actions of a few who twisted a great religion is unfair and un-American. Today we are not at war with Islam -- we are at war with Al-Qaeda and other extremists who hate freedom.

“The members of our military are men and women at arms -- battling for hearts and minds. And their greatest weapon in that fight is the strength of our American values, which have always inspired people around the world. But if we do not practice here at home what we preach abroad -- if we do not lead by example - we undermine our soldiers. We undermine our foreign policy objectives. And we undermine our national security.”

**New York Governor David Patterson**

*Statement Excerpt:*

“There is no local, state or federal statute or any clause of the Constitution that would prohibit the mosque from being there. And so therefore anybody that thinks otherwise clearly is not realizing what has really been the bedrock core of the principles of our liberty.”

“It’s my firm belief that if we talk about perhaps maybe some way of working this out, which would be suitable to both parties, it would be a great day for this country.”

“I think it’s rather clear that building a center there meets all the requirements, but it does seem to ignite an immense amount of anxiety among the citizens of New York and people everywhere, and I think not without cause.”

**R-NY Candidate for Governor Rick Lazio**

*Statement Excerpt:*

“New Yorkers have been through enough. Now a terrorist-sympathizing imam wants to build a $100 million mosque near Ground Zero. Where’s this money coming from? Who’s really behind it. Incredibly, Andrew Cuomo defends it, even though this imam said America was an accessory to 9/11. Andrew Cuomo is very, very wrong. Call Andrew Cuomo and tell him a Ground Zero mosque is wrong”

**R-NY Candidate for Governor Carl Paladino**

*Statement Excerpt:*

“The mosque is a symbol of the triumph and conquest of Islam and they want to celebrate that triumph in the dust of the World Trade Center.”

**Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell (R)**

*Statement Excerpt:*

“I… believe it is an issue for the people of New York to decide. If it were my decision, I would not put that center there.”

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