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Why is Building a Mosque So Controversial?

**Vote Run Lead:
Your Kitchen
Cabinet**
July 15, 2020



A Tale of 2 Mosques in Tennessee



Islamic
Center of
Murfreesboro

Islamic Society
of Greater
Chattanooga





First, let's understand the political landscape in Tennessee

- Tennessee is in the middle of the 'Bible Belt'
- Reliably red state, large cities more progressive
- Murfreesboro is a suburb of Nashville
- Chattanooga is the 3rd largest city in TN
- Nashville has seen large scale refugee resettlement programs in the 90's and 2000's bring thousands of immigrants into Middle TN

2010 Chattanooga



- Chattanooga begins planning for new mosque in 2007
- Plan includes full time school with gym.
- Before going before the zoning board, leaders reach out to area churches

2010 Murfreesboro



- Sign vandalized in January
- Mosque plans are approved in May County Commission meeting
- June, Congressional candidate in the 6th district, Lou Ann Zelenik, speaks out against mosque
- At June county commission meeting, opponents of mosque speak
- World Outreach Church leads the fight
- July, major protest
- August: Construction equipment vandalized
- Murfreesboro Mayor Burgess supports the mosque

Let the Lawsuits Begin

September 2010

- Laurie Cardoza-Moore, Proclaiming Justice To The Nation , spearhead lawsuit against Rutherford County.
- Adequate notice was not given for the zoning commission meeting, especially being a mosque
- Plaintiffs claim approval of mosque puts residents in danger
- Opponents lost, but lawsuit opened door to another one

September 2011

- Opponents filed lawsuit against county for violating open meeting laws
- May 2012, Judge Corlew agreed, ordered zoning commission revisit approval

July 2012

- US Justice Dep't filed lawsuit in US District Court in Middle TN.
- Violation of Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act
- ICM Files lawsuit with Beckett Fund for Religious Liberty
- 2014 ICM won against lawsuit against the cemetery at ICM

Role of Politicians



- Congressional Elections
 - 2010, 2012- 6th Congressional Districts
 - Diane Black , Lou Ann Zelenik
- State Senate and Representatives
 - State Representative Judd Matheny- rural TN
 - State Senator Bill Ketron
 - Murfreesboro
 - Currently Rutherford County Mayor
- Candidates use fear-mongering tactics to get votes
 - Security
 - Terrorism
 - Hate crimes increase during election season
 - Creeping sharia



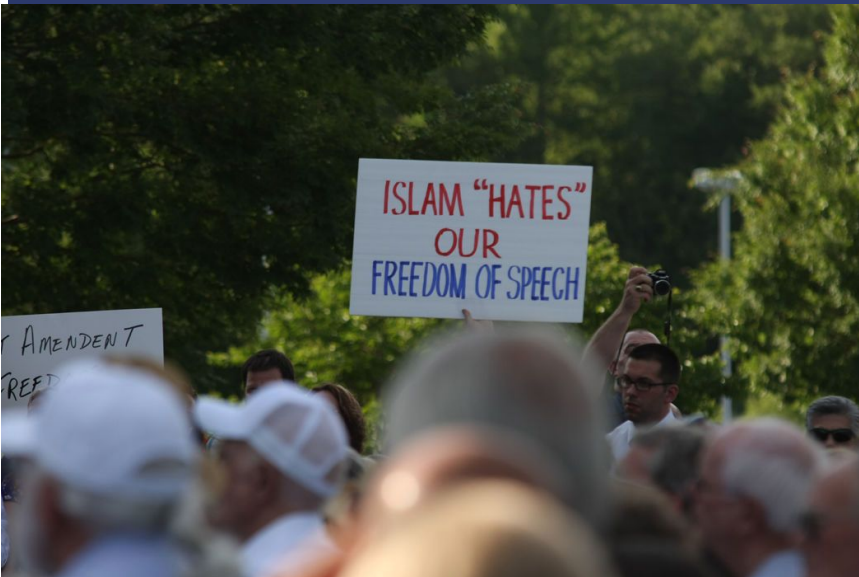
2011 Anti-Sharia Bill

- TN has been a testing ground for extreme anti-immigrant bills
- Sponsored by State Senator Bill Ketron and State Representative Judd Matheny
- Attempt to stop Murfreesboro mosque from being built
- Muslims across state organized and defeated bill



Role of Islamophobes

- Pamela Gellar – ‘Ground Zero Mosque’
- Nashville has the largest chapter for ACT! For America – Bridgette Gabriel
- TN Freedom Coalition Lou Ann Zelenik
- Local Islamophobes: Spreading fear of Muslims
 - Julie Cardoza Moore: Proclaiming Justice to the Nation
 - Bill Warner (French) : Political Islam
 - Cathy Hinnners: Daily Roll Call
- Lawsuit led by Julie Cardoza Moore
- Frank Gaffney – Center for Security Policy
 - Creeping Sharia, Testified Islam is not a religion



Is Islam a Religion?

Islam is a "seditious ideology, not a religion," Frank Gaffney

- Frank Gaffney, argues that Islam is a political ideology, not protected by First Amendment
- US Attorney's office files an amicus brief stating US has always recognized Islam as a religion.

Tactics to Block Mosques

- Stereotypes
 - Security – Terrorist breeding/training ground
 - Creeping sharia
- Islam is not a religion, a political ideology
 - No First Amendment Rights as churches
- Open meetings laws
- Graveyard opposition
- Traffic concerns



Mosques Open in 2012

- Both Murfreesboro and Chattanooga mosques have official openings in July and August of 2012
- US Attorney, law enforcement, elected official and supporter show support
- Islamic Center of Murfreesboro
 - Lawsuits that will not be resolved until 2014
 - Vandalized 2017
 - Outpouring of support for ICM from community members
- Islamic Society of Greater Chattanooga opens without any controversy

