

FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE SENATOR KEVIN PARKER

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Senators Urge Chairman Ball To Reject Bigotry

(Brooklyn, NY) Today, Senator Kevin Parker was joined by Senators Tony Avella, Adriano Espaillat, Ruth Hassell-Thompson, Liz Krueger, Velmanette Montgomery, Jose Peralta, Bill Perkins, Gustavo Rivera, Diane Savino, and Andrea Stewart-Cousins in a letter to Senator Greg Ball opposing the participation of Nonie Darwish and Frank Gaffney in upcoming hearings before the Veterans, Homeland Security, and Military Affairs Committee. On April 8, 2011, Senator Ball will hold a hearing, "Reviewing our Preparedness: An Examination of New York's Public Protection Ten Years After September 11."

Regrettably, he includes a topic not germane to the security of New York, Shariah (Islamic law). The Chairman has invited Nonie Darwish, an individual unqualified to speak on Islamic jurisprudence and has a long record of using racist and incendiary language that has no place before any committee of the State Senate. Ms. Darwish has referred to Islam as "not a true religion" and to President Obama's mother as a "radical" for marrying a Muslim. She told the New York Times in an August 7, 2010 article: "A mosque is not just a place for worship. It's a place where war is started, where commandments to do jihad start, where incitements against non-Muslims occur. It's a place where ammunition was stored."

"I am greatly concerned that a committee of this Senate seeks to criminalize an entire faith tradition," said Senator Parker. "Moreover, the individual selected by Chairman Ball lacks the credibility and credentials necessary for a substantive policy hearing," continued Parker. "We in New York face serious challenges with regards to protecting our state, this portion of the hearing merely serves as a distraction."

Although some seek to isolate and vilify Muslims, this diverse community has played an instrumental role since the founding of our nation. Today, hundreds of thousands of Muslim Americans are a part of the fabric of our state. They are our neighbors, physicians, entrepreneurs, educators, legislators and serve in law enforcement.

It is disconcerting that in the past two years, there has been a growth in vitriol against Muslims and those who are perceived to be Muslim. This coincides with an increase in violence and discrimination against Muslims, Sikhs, Arabs and other members of the South Asian community. Thus, I ask Chairman Ball to withdraw the invitation to Ms. Darwish and Mr. Gaffney, and call upon him to take this opportunity to hold hearings that truly address the safety and well-being for all New Yorkers," said Parker.

About Senator Parker

Senator Kevin S. Parker is intimately familiar with the needs of his ethnically diverse community that consists of 311,000 constituents in Flatbush, East Flatbush, Midwood, Ditmas Park, Kensington and Borough Park. He is the Ranking Member of the Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee,

former Majority Whip and First Vice Chair of the Association of Black, Puerto Rican Asian Legislators.

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