



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE SENATOR KEVIN PARKER (D-21)

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(Brooklyn, NY) On April 9th, Senator Kevin Parker attended the Fourth Islamic Finance Forum at the Boalt School of Law, entitled *Ethics & Regulations: Critical Approaches to Islamic Banking*. The Senator led the discussion on "The Role of Government in Providing Shariah Compliant Financing: Challenges and Opportunities." He highlighted the benefits of providing alternative structures of financing in New York and the nation. Earlier this session, Senator Parker introduced S. 2792/A. 5836, legislation that creates an investment vehicle that comports with Islamic law known as an Alternative Finance Investment Bond (AFIB). AFIB would attract investment from individuals and businesses in the United States and abroad who do not invest in conventional debt instruments. He also expressed concern regarding the growing anti-Shariah movement, with fifteen states introducing legislation banning Islamic and international law.

"This year we dealt with a \$10 billion state budget deficit. In order to be competitive and create jobs, New York must compete globally for new capital inflows," contended Parker. New York ranks third foreign direct investment, lagging considerably behind Texas and California. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that for 2007, Texas attracted \$119 billion in foreign direct investment, California \$110 billion and New York a mere \$82 billion.

The Persian Gulf, South East Asia, and other emerging markets have experienced tremendous growth in recent years. Investors from these countries are seeking investment opportunities overseas that are consistent with their religious beliefs, namely a prohibition on interest. In fact, General Electric recently issued a \$500 million Shariah compliant bond for the leasing of aircraft. "Allowing for Shariah compliant financing not only benefits communities but creates jobs and fills state coffers with revenue," said Parker.

On the issue of those who seek to vilify a religious or ethnic group the Senator stated, "we as New Yorkers and Americans have overcome bigotry in the past, whether against the Irish, Japanese, or African American communities. We are better than this and shall prevail again."

For more information on the conference, please visit:
<http://www.law.berkeley.edu/10701.htm>

About Senator Kevin Parker

Senator Kevin S. Parker is intimately familiar with the needs of his diverse community that consists of 311,000 constituents in Flatbush, East Flatbush, Midwood, Ditmas Park, Kensington and Borough Park. Senator Parker has the largest Pakistani community outside of Pakistan in his district, a large amount of them being Muslim.