

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

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Senator Parker Speaks on Shariah at NYC Bar
Addresses Audience on Islam & Democracy in the U.S.

(Brooklyn, NY) On May 18, 2011, Senator Parker addressed the New York City Bar Association, on the topic of, “Islam and Democracy in the U.S. – A Legislator’s Perspective.” The New York City Bar Association founded in 1870, is a voluntary association of lawyers and law students. Today the City Bar has over 23,000 members.

Senator Parker highlighted the proliferation of legislation introduced across two dozen states targeting Islamic law and the resulting hostility and violence against Muslims and those perceived to be Muslim in the United States.

In November, Oklahoma passed the “Save Our State Amendment”, prohibiting courts from applying Islamic and International law in state courts. Subsequently, Louisiana and Tennessee have enacted laws intended to prohibit the application of Islamic law in their courts.

“We are all witness to the recent challenges to dictatorial regimes and burgeoning democratic movements across the Middle East. It is ironic that a growing number of politicians seek to limit the democratic and constitutional rights of individuals in our country,” said Parker. “In fact, those who are promoting these bills to defend the alleged encroachment of Islamic law in the United States are themselves violating the Constitution as Chief Judge LaGrange concluded in Oklahoma,” continued Parker.

The increasing racist and incendiary language used by those promoting these discriminatory bills has led to a rise in acts of violence, discrimination, and isolation against Muslim, Sikh, Arab, and other South Asian communities. In March, two elderly Sikh men wearing turbans with full beards were shot as they went for an evening walk, one was tragically killed. Last month a 12-year-old Muslim girl was attacked by two classmates who beat her attempting to pull off her headscarf while asking if she was Muslim.

In February, Senator Parker introduced legislation that would allow the New York state to issue Alternative Finance Investments Bonds (AFIB), also known as *sukuk* in Arabic, a financial instrument that comports with Islamic law. This bill would allow investors who otherwise cannot participate in interest based transaction to invest in New York. If passed this legislation would decrease the cost of borrowing to the state and attract billions of dollars to New York.

In April, Senator Parker attended the Fourth Islamic Finance Forum at the University of California Berkeley, 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.”

About Senator Kevin 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, Majority Whip emeritus and First Vice Chair of the Association of Black, Puerto Rican & Asian Legislators. Senator Parker has the largest Pakistani community outside of Pakistan in his district, the vast majority of them being Muslim.

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