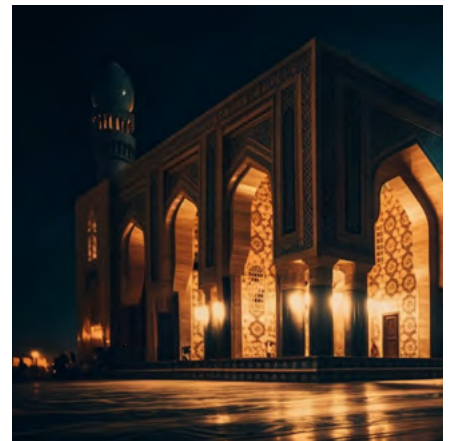


AUGUST RECESS TOOLKIT 2024:

Engaging Members of Congress, Protecting Muslim Houses
of Worship & Nonprofits, Advocating for Palestine





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Introduction

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, is encouraging every American Muslim to become civically engaged during the congressional recess in August by requesting in-state meetings with their U.S. Representatives and Senators. Every year, Congress takes a summer break for August and resumes the week after Labor Day. This year, the recess begins on August 5th and will continue until September 8th.

With 2024 being a critical election year, this recess is an essential opportunity to advocate for national issues important to the Muslim community, such as countering congressional efforts to silence Muslim and student activism against the U.S.-backed Israel genocide of over 48,000 Palestinians in Gaza, as well as Israel's ongoing occupation, apartheid, and murder of 500 civilians in the West Bank.

Current Challenges in Congress

McCarthyism 2.0: Currently, the Republican-led U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Accountability and the U.S. Committee on Education and Workforce are engaging in modern McCarthyism. They are discriminatorily investigating the funding and affiliations of more than 20 legally operating Muslim, Palestinian, and Jewish nonprofit advocacy organizations for supporting anti-genocide protests, including those on college campuses. These investigations, based solely on accusations from far-right, pro-Israel conspiracy theorists, have been criticized as a waste of American tax dollars and condemned by CAIR and others as "McCarthyism 2.0." However, this time the target of congressional investigations are Americans standing up for Palestinian human rights

Legislative Threats: Over the past year, Congress has also attempted to pass misleading and threatening legislation aimed at reclassifying First Amendment-protected speech, student gatherings, and protests of the genocide in Gaza – seeking to label it as hate speech or even material support for terrorism. This includes congressional attempts to pass into law:

1. H.R. 6408 / S. 4136: This bill, titled "To amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to terminate the tax-exempt status of terrorist-supporting organizations," would grant the President the arbitrary administrative power to strip nonprofit organizations, including mosques, of their tax-exempt status based on subjective claims of materially supporting terrorism without due any process. This act has already been adopted by the U.S. House of Representatives.

2. The Antisemitism Awareness Act (H.R. 6090 / S. 4127): This act conflates criticism of the Israeli government with antisemitism and instructs the Department of Education to use the controversial International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. While CAIR unequivocally opposes antisemitism, this definition overly censors critiques of the Israeli government and its treatment of Palestinians and make student protestors targets of Department of Education hate crime investigations. Notably, human rights organizations like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and B'Tselem have condemned Israeli actions as violations of international human rights law and acts of apartheid. This bill could potentially freeze the free speech of all American students on campus and silence students who express fair and legitimate concerns by labeling dissenting views as antisemitic. This act has also been adopted by the U.S. House.
3. The Countering Antisemitism Act (H.R. 7921 / S. 4091): This act proposes a national coordinator and federal interagency task force to combat antisemitism, using the IHRA's expansive definition designed to silence Palestinian human rights activists. The ramifications of this act, if passed, could increase state discrimination and target Arab Americans and pro-Palestine supporters for speaking out against Israel's genocide in Gaza or occupation and apartheid state policies.

Call to Action: CAIR is actively campaigning with Muslim faith leaders, civil rights groups, and other nonprofit organizations to ensure these investigations do not threaten the work of Muslim activism and anti-free speech bills do not become law. While members of the American Muslim community have been sending messages and making phone calls to help in these efforts, we are now urging the American Muslim community to join us by using this toolkit to schedule meetings with their members of Congress during the August recess. This recess period, when elected congressional representatives are in their home districts, is a critical time to build momentum on issues supported by Muslim organizations, activists, and communities nationwide.

How to Get Involved:



1 Educate Yourself and Others:
Read and share this toolkit and promote Muslim civic participation and engagement.

2 Schedule In-District Office Meetings:
Meet with your U.S. congressional representatives and senators in their local district offices.

3 Attend Town Halls:
Participate in town hall meetings and constituent meetings to voice your concerns.

By engaging directly with Congress, you can help protect the rights of Muslim nonprofits and advocate for justice in Palestine.

Toolkit Outline and Resources

The following outline and key resources provide an overview of what is included in this toolkit. This information can help you more effectively engage with your members of Congress during the August recess.

Section 1: What is August Congressional Recess?

- Explanation of the August congressional recess and its significance.
- Importance of engaging with representatives while they are in their home districts.
- Key dates for the 2024 recess period (August 5th - September 8th).

Section 2: Requesting In-District Meetings with Your Members of Congress

- Step-by-step guide on how to request in-state meetings with your U.S. Representatives and Senators.
- Sample email and phone scripts for scheduling appointments.
- Tips for securing a meeting and following up with congressional offices.

Section 3: Tips on Meeting with Your Members of Congress

- Best practices for conducting effective meetings with lawmakers.
- How to prepare for your meeting: researching your representative's positions and interests.
- Guidelines for presenting your issues clearly and persuasively.
- Strategies for building a positive relationship with your representatives and their staff.
- Follow-up actions after your meeting to reinforce your advocacy.

Section 4: Knowing the Issues: Using Legislative Fact Sheets in Congressional Meetings

- This section provides detailed information on key advocacy issues to discuss with your representatives, ensuring you can articulate concerns clearly and effectively.
- Legislative fact sheets are invaluable tools for succinctly presenting complex information and advocating effectively. CAIR has provided three fact sheets on the following issues:

**Issue One: Opposing
McCarthyism 2.0: Calling Out
Anti-Muslim, Anti-Palestinian
Investigations in the U.S.
House of Representatives**

- Background on the investigations by the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Accountability and the U.S. Committee on Education and Workforce.
- The impact of these investigations on Muslim, Palestinian, and Jewish nonprofit advocacy organizations.
- Arguments to present against these investigations, emphasizing their baselessness and the waste of taxpayer dollars.

**Issue Two: Opposing Anti-
Free Speech, Nonprofit &
Mosque-Killer Legislation**

- Overview of H.R. 6408 / S. 4136 and its potential impact on nonprofit organizations, including mosques.
- Explanation of how this legislation threatens First Amendment rights and due process.
- Talking points to use when advocating against this bill.

**Issue Three: Opposing
Misleadingly Titled
Antisemitism Awareness Act &
Countering Antisemitism Act**

- Explanation of H.R. 6090 / S. 4127 and H.R. 7921 / S. 4091 and their implications.
- How these acts use the IHRA definition of antisemitism to silence legitimate criticism of the Israeli government.
- Evidence from human rights organizations condemning Israeli actions and supporting the right to free speech.
- Key points to articulate the dangers of conflating antisemitism with criticism of Israel.

Section 5: Reporting your scheduled congressional meeting and follow-up to CAIR.

By using this toolkit and engaging directly with Congress, you can play a vital role in protecting the rights of Muslim nonprofits and advocating for justice in Palestine.

Section 1:

What is the August Congressional Recess?

Explanation of the August Congressional Recess and Its Significance: The August congressional recess is a period when members of Congress leave Washington, D.C., and return to their home districts to engage with their constituents. This recess typically lasts for the entire month of August and provides a critical opportunity for the public to interact directly with their elected officials. During this time, representatives and senators are more accessible and open to hearing from their constituents about the issues that matter most to them.

Importance of Engaging with Representatives While They Are in Their Home Districts: Engaging with your members of Congress during the August recess is essential for several reasons:

1. **Accessibility:** With representatives back in their home districts, it is easier to schedule face-to-face meetings, attend town halls, and participate in community events where you can directly communicate your concerns and priorities.
2. **Influence:** Personal interactions with constituents can have a significant impact on a representative's understanding and stance on issues. Hearing directly from you helps humanize and contextualize the policies and legislation they are considering.
3. **Visibility:** Advocacy efforts during the recess can draw attention to high-priority issues and demonstrate to representatives that there is strong local support for particular causes, making it harder for them to ignore these concerns when they return to Washington.

Key Dates for the 2024 Recess Period: The 2024 congressional recess begins on August 5th and will continue until September 8th.



Annual Call to Action: Every year, CAIR urges American Muslims to take advantage of the August congressional recess by requesting meetings with their U.S. Representatives and Senators to advocate on state and national issues of importance. While members of Congress are in their home districts for the annual break, it is important for American Muslims to schedule in-district office meetings or attend town halls to build greater momentum on issues already being supported by Muslim organizations, activists, and communities nationwide.

This August congressional recess is a prime opportunity to meet with your members of Congress face-to-face in your own backyard. By taking this proactive step, you can help ensure that the voices and concerns of the Muslim community are heard and addressed at the highest levels of government.

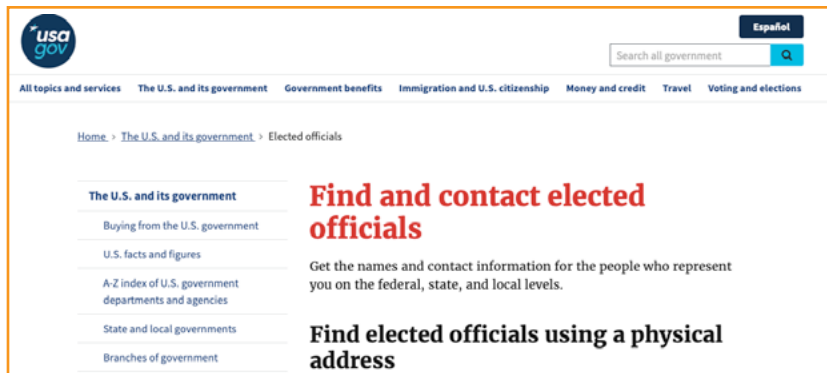
Section 2:

Requesting In-District Meetings with Your Members of Congress During August Recess

Establishing contact with your elected representatives in Congress during the August recess is essential for scheduling in-person meetings with your House Representative and Senator. While participating in online action alerts can be impactful, a formal in-person constituent meeting request carries greater weight.

Timing is Crucial: Begin in July: Meetings requests for the August congressional recess should ideally be sent starting in July, several weeks before the congressional recess begins. This early action increases your chances of securing a spot on the member of Congress's meeting schedule.

Obtaining Congressional Office Contact Information



1. Visit the Official USA Government Website:

- o Navigate to the “Find and contact elected officials” page on the official USA Government website.

(Link: <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>)

2. Locate Your Representatives' Contact Information:

- o Based on your address, the website provides website and contact information for your federal government congressional U.S. House and Senate representatives' local and Washington, D.C., offices. Each member of Congress' website should also list their in-state district offices.

Contacting the District, In-State Office

3. Dial the Phone Number Provided:

- o Call the phone number provided for the in-state district office. This office primarily handles local constituent issues but acts as a conduit to schedule in-person meetings during congressional recesses.

4. Request Email Addresses:

- o Politely inquire about the email addresses of the in-district office meeting scheduler or director, who can facilitate your meeting request to discuss issues impacting the free speech and civil rights of Muslim constituents.

5. Clarify Your Purpose:

- o Explain that you wish to request an in-district meeting during the August recess to discuss ongoing issues impacting the Muslim community. Request an email address to send the in-person meeting request.

Maintaining Courtesy and Respect

6. Be Respectful:

- o Maintain a respectful tone throughout the conversation.

7. Accept Limitations:

- o If the staff member is unable to provide you with the specific email address of a staff member, express gratitude for their assistance and proceed with the general email address if available or an online form.

Taking Notes and Following Up

8. Write Down Email Addresses:

- o If you obtain the email addresses, ensure that you accurately transcribe them.

9. Send a Follow-Up Email:

- o Subsequently, send an email to the provided email addresses, adhering to the template message and guidelines provided in this toolkit.

Persistence and Demeanor

10. Be Persistent:

- o Congressional offices receive a high volume of requests. Persistence and a courteous demeanor can significantly increase your chances of securing an in-district meeting during the August recess.

By following these steps diligently and starting your requests early, you can effectively request and secure an in-district meeting with your representatives during the August recess to advocate for critical issues affecting the free speech rights of the Muslim community and human rights situation in Palestine.

Section 2 (Cont.):

Sending Your Template Message to Your U.S. Representative and Senators

Once you've secured the necessary information to request your congressional meetings, it's essential that your email meeting request is written effectively. In writing your email, draw from CAIR's template congressional meeting request below and follow these instructions for sending the template message:

It is important to personalize the template message before sending the message to ensure it includes the recipient's name and the specific office you are addressing.

Email Subject Line: When sending an email, craft a concise and informative subject line. For example, "August Recess Constituent Meeting Request."

Proofread Your Message: Ensure that your message is free from typos, grammatical errors, and any other issues. A well-written message demonstrates professionalism and commitment.

Send the Message: Click the "Send" button on your email platform or send the physical letter via mail, following any guidelines provided by the congressional office for physical correspondence.

Keep a Record: Maintain a record of the date and time you sent your message and any responses you receive. Keeping records will help you stay organized and follow up effectively.

Follow Up: If you don't receive a response within a reasonable time frame, consider sending a polite follow-up email or making a courteous phone call to inquire about the status of your meeting request.

Template August Recess In-State, District Office Meeting Request Email

Subject: August Recess Constituent Meeting Request

Dear **[Congressional District Office Staffer's Name]**:

I hope this message finds you well. My name is **[Your Name]**, and I am a constituent residing in **[Your City/Town]**. I am writing to request a meeting with **[House Representative/Senator's Name]** during the upcoming August recess to discuss urgent matters concerning the Muslim community.

Specifically, I am deeply concerned about recent developments involving congressional investigations and legislative threats that threaten free speech and civil liberties of the American Muslim community. During the meeting, I would like to discuss:

1. **McCarthyism 2.0:** Ensuring your office opposes the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Accountability and the U.S. Committee on Education and Workforce's ongoing joint investigations into Muslim, Palestinian, and Jewish nonprofit advocacy organizations under accusations from anti-Palestinian conspiracy theorists. These investigations have been widely criticized as a misuse of taxpayer funds and labeled as "McCarthyism 2.0" by organizations like Council on American-Islamic Relations.
2. **Opposing Legislative Threats to Free Speech, Palestinian Human Rights:**
 - o **Opposing H.R. 6408 / S. 4136:** This bill proposes amending the Internal Revenue Code to revoke the tax-exempt status of houses of worship and nonprofit organizations, potentially based on classified evidence, without due process. It raises significant concerns about the infringement of First Amendment rights and political targeting of Muslim and Palestinian nonprofits, including mosques.
 - o **Opposing the Antisemitism Awareness Act (H.R. 6090 / S. 4127) / Countering Antisemitism Act (H.R. 7921 / S. 4091):** These acts wrongly conflate criticism of the Israeli government with antisemitism and uses a controversial hate speech definition that stifles legitimate criticism of Israeli policies towards Palestinians. These acts could undermine efforts to address human rights violations and be used to wrongly target pro-Palestine supporters.

These issues are of utmost importance to many American Muslim constituents in our district. I believe it is crucial to discuss these matters with **[House Representative/Senator's Name]** to ensure our voices are heard and to advocate for policies that uphold civil liberties and protect marginalized communities.

Please let me know a convenient time during the August recess when **[House Representative/Senator's Name]** may be available for a meeting. I am flexible and willing to adjust my schedule to accommodate. I look forward to your response and the opportunity to discuss these critical issues in person.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[Your Email Address]

[Your Phone Number]

Section 3:

Tips on Meeting with Your Members of Congress

By following these tips, you can increase your chances of having a successful congressional meeting and making a positive impact.

Be prepared and on time

- Research the member of Congress or staffer with whom you are meeting. Take time to learn about their background, their committee assignments, and their positions on the issues you want to discuss.
- Prepare talking points for your meeting. These points will help you stay focused and on message. Whenever possible, connect your talking point or message to a personal story or real-life example that underscores your message.
- Arrive for your meeting on time or a few minutes early. If you are driving to the meeting, make sure to know where to park in advance.

State the issue and the solution

- Be clear and concise about the issue you want to discuss and the solution you are proposing.
- Use personal stories and real-life examples to illustrate your points.
- Be prepared to answer questions about your proposal. Be polite and listen carefully.
- Be respectful of the member of Congress or staffer's time.
- Be open to hearing their views on the issue, even if they differ from your own.
- Ask clarifying questions and take notes to ensure that you understand their position.

Additional tips

- Be professional and courteous.
- Dress appropriately.
- Be yourself and be genuine.
- Thank the member of Congress or staffer for their time.

Follow up after the meeting

- Within a few days of your meeting, send a thank-you note to the member of Congress or staffer.
- If you promised to provide any additional information, like CAIR's congressional factsheet (see next section), follow through on that promise promptly.
- Stay in touch with the member of Congress or staffer's office by attending events, sending emails, and making phone calls.
- By following these tips, you can increase the chances of having a successful meeting with a member of Congress or congressional staff.



Section 4:

Knowing the Issues: Using Legislative Fact Sheets in Congressional Meetings

Legislative fact sheets are indispensable tools that provide concise and well-organized information about proposed legislation, current issues, or policy matters. They serve as essential resources for individuals and advocacy groups seeking to engage with their elected representatives during congressional meetings.

Using CAIR's Provided Legislative Fact Sheets

These fact sheets offer a comprehensive overview of the key points, supporting data, and recommended actions related to specific congressional actions or bills, empowering you to navigate and guide your discussions effectively. This toolkit includes three legislative fact sheets to prepare you for your meetings, and these fact sheets can also be passed along to your members of Congress:

- **Issue One: Opposing McCarthyism 2.0: Addressing Anti-Muslim, Anti-Palestinian Investigations in the U.S. House of Representatives**
- **Issue Two: Opposing Nonprofit & Mosque Tax-Status Killing Legislation**
- **Issue Three: Opposing Threats to Free Speech & Palestinian Human Rights: The Misleadingly Titled Antisemitism Awareness Act & Countering Antisemitism Act**

Using legislative fact sheets during congressional meetings can significantly enhance your advocacy efforts. They enable you to present complex issues in a clear and organized manner, facilitating effective communication of your concerns and recommendations to your elected representatives.

These fact sheets provide a structured framework for discussing key points, supporting data, and suggested actions, ensuring that you remain focused and articulate during your interactions with policymakers.

Issue One:

Opposition to Congressional Investigations Targeting Muslim, Palestinian, and Jewish Advocacy Organizations

Overview: CAIR and the American Muslim community urge all members of Congress to reject the recently announced anti-Muslim, anti-Palestinian congressional investigations led by the House Oversight and Accountability Committee and the House Education and Workforce Committee. These investigations are dishonestly targeting more than 20 Muslim, Palestinian, and Jewish advocacy organizations, baselessly accusing them of either having ties to terrorism or other foreign influence due to their actual or perceived support of pro-Palestinian human rights activities, especially on college campuses.

CAIR, alongside American Muslim, Palestinian, Jewish, and civil rights organizations, have already openly condemned the discriminatory and Islamophobic motives behind these congressional investigations initiated by House Oversight and Accountability Committee Chair James Comer (R-KY) and House Education and Workforce Committee Chair Virginia Foxx (R-NC).

Specifically, these Republican-led House committees have demanded the Department of Treasury provide them with Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) – although it is questionable as to whether such reports even exist – and other banking information related to a wide spectrum of legally operating nonprofit and advocacy organizations and student groups, as well as foundations associated with prominent philanthropists like Bill and Melinda Gates and the Soros family. Chair Comer is also sending letters directly to some of these nonprofit groups demanding sensitive financial and administrative information.

Congressional Actions Needed: CAIR and the American Muslim community are calling on all members of Congress to:

- **Denounce These Discriminatory Tactics:** Publicly condemn the discriminatory and unconstitutional investigative tactics employed by Chairs Comer and Foxx.
- **Protect Civil Rights:** Oppose any actions resulting from these investigations that could erode the civil rights of Muslim, Palestinian, and Jewish advocacy organizations.
- **Uphold Free Speech:** Ensure all Americans can freely engage in advocacy and dissent without undue government scrutiny, safeguarding the principles of free speech and association.

Key Discussion Points and Background Information:

- **Discriminatory Nature:** The joint investigations led by Republican House Chairs Comer and Foxx disregard legitimate advocacy for Palestinian human rights while unfairly singling out Muslim, Palestinian, and Jewish organizations. Chairs Comer and Foxx first announced their investigation by sending a demand letter to Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen requesting SAR reports on 20 nonprofits on May 14, 2024. Chair Comer then sent a follow-up investigatory letter on May 29, 2024, to American Muslims for Palestine (AMP). CAIR notes that Chair Comer's McCarthyism-fueled investigatory letter incorrectly stated that AMP is the parent organization of the student-led organization National Students for Justice in Palestine. It remains unclear where the focus or target of these congressional investigations will go next.
- **McCarthyism 2.0:** CAIR and others have criticized these newly announced congressional investigations as modern-day McCarthyism, citing reliance on unfounded accusations from far-right, pro-Israel sources. They draw parallels to historical congressional witch hunts led by Senator Joseph McCarthy, who aimed to smear prominent Americans, including actors, unionists, and civil rights activists, by accusing them of being sympathetic to or advancing Communism or having ties to the Soviet Union. These tactics relied heavily on unsubstantiated accusations and guilt by association, backed by congressional and federal law enforcement investigations.
- **Impact of Investigations:** In 2023, CAIR documented 8,061 cases of Islamophobia, the highest in its 30-year history, with a significant rise in the final months of the year. These joint committee investigations overlook or deliberately undermine instances of violence and harassment against Muslim, Palestinian, and Jewish students. CAIR notes that pro-Palestinian student protesters at UCLA, Harvard, and Columbia have all faced violent attacks, harassment, or doxxing, highlighting a disturbing trend of rising discrimination and insufficient protection by campus and state authorities. Such targeted violence has also resulted in tragic cases like that of six-year-old Palestinian-American Wadea Al-Fayoume who was murdered in Chicago due to Islamophobic and anti-Palestinian motives.
- **Student Pro-Palestinian Protests Remain Nonviolent:** Despite these incidents, student protests for Palestinian rights have been overwhelmingly peaceful. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) reported that between October 7 and May 3, 97% of student demonstrations were peaceful, continuing the American tradition of civil disobedience. The House Oversight and Accountability Committee and the House Education and Workforce Committee are ignoring this reality.

- **Student Pro-Palestinian Protests Are Connected to Legacy Student Protest Movements:** Like the historic student protests against segregation, the Vietnam War, and South African apartheid, the recent sit-ins and other protests launched by college students across America have been overwhelmingly peaceful, respectful, and diverse--often led by Palestinian, Arab, Muslim, and Jewish students engaged in the long American tradition of peaceful civil disobedience.
- **Chair Comer's History of Anti-Semitism, Discrimination:** It is not surprising Chair Comer would use his position of power to attack Muslim, Arab, Palestinian, and Jewish organizations. [An article from the American Jewish community publication The Forward](#), published on May 7, exposes Chairman Comer's troubling history of antisemitic rhetoric, including his refusal to condemn the Great Replacement Theory and his engagement with antisemitic QAnon content. The article also details his use of coded antisemitic language against Jewish representatives.

Issue Two:

Opposing Anti-Free Speech, Nonprofit & Mosque-Killer Legislation (H.R. 6408 / S. 4136)

The Issue: CAIR joins national civil liberties, human rights, community, faith, and privacy organizations in urging Congress to exclude H.R. 6408 / S. 4136 from any appropriations bill and to reject it as a standalone bill. Introduced by Representatives David Kustoff (R-TN) and Bradley Schneider (D-IL) and Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and Angus King (D-ME), and previously passed by the U.S. House, this act aims to shut down pro-Palestinian nonprofit organizations by allowing a single official at the Treasury Department to revoke their tax exempt status without due process or justification. These powers could also be misused by future administrations to target any house of worship or nonprofit organization.

In May, 135 organizations successfully urged the U.S. Senate to reject this act as an amendment to the 2025 Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act. These groups are now calling on members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate to similarly oppose the inclusion of this act in annual congressional funding packages like the 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) or Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act. This act threatens constitutional rights and democratic principles, including free speech and due process for houses of worship, nonprofits, and their supporters.

Request to Congress: Members of Congress must oppose and “**VOTE NO**” on the inclusion of H.R. 6408 and S. 4136 as an amendment to any appropriations acts or as a standalone bill. It is crucial to maintain a fair and accountable system of governance that respects constitutional rights, including due process, of nonprofit organizations and houses of worship.

Reasons Congress Must Oppose the Advancement of H.R. 6408 / S. 4136:

1. **Inappropriate Legislative Vehicles:** Advancing legislation that broadly impacts civil liberties and the tax status of nonprofit organizations as a provision in larger spending bills is inappropriate and undermines adequate debate and oversight. The complexity and urgency of the NDAA and other appropriation acts often result in less scrutiny for included provisions and increases the risk of unintended consequences.
2. **Broad Discretionary Powers and Potential for Abuse:** This act would grant the Secretary of the Treasury expansive powers to revoke the tax-exempt status of nonprofit organizations based on subjective determinations of being “terrorist-supporting organizations.” Without sufficient accountability measures, this authority could be exploited by any presidential administration to target organizations arbitrarily, especially in a polarized political climate.

3. **Threat to Free Speech and Legitimate Advocacy:** The proposed legislation poses a significant threat to free speech by potentially targeting organizations advocating for politically sensitive issues. Recent incidents involving state governors and universities attempting to suppress Jewish and Palestinian advocacy groups highlight the dangers of such unchecked powers.

The motivation behind these bills appears to be a deliberate attempt to silence criticism of Israel and advocacy for Palestinian human rights. Given the ongoing humanitarian crises in Gaza and the West Bank, this bias is both egregious and unacceptable. Codifying such discriminatory intent into law would further inflame existing tensions and institutionalize prejudice against specific groups, undermining the United States' commitment to human rights and equality.

4. **Due Process and Legal Concerns:** The legislation would allow the use of "classified information" to make designations without permitting affected organizations to review or challenge this secret evidence in administrative challenges or federal courts. This lack of transparency violates due process rights and mirrors the issues associated with federal terrorism watchlists, which have been criticized for their arbitrary and opaque nature.

5. **Existing Legal Framework:** Current laws, including the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 and the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), already address the financing of terrorism and prohibit designated entities from claiming tax-exempt status. Additional legislation is redundant and risks creating more opportunities for abuse and legal challenges.

6. **McCarthyism 2.0:** In May, the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Accountability Chairman James Comer and Committee on Education and the Workforce Chairwoman Virginia Foxx sent a letter to the Secretary of Treasury asking it to disclose any Suspicious Activity Reports submitted by banks to the department regarding more than a dozen major Jewish, Muslim, and Palestinian student groups and advocacy organizations supportive of Palestinian human rights, as well as foundations run by Bill and Melinda Gates and the Soros family. They also announced their committees' ongoing investigations into these groups.

Disappointingly, some members of Congress, like Chairs Comer and Foxx, are actively waging a public campaign falsely asserting that U.S.-based nonprofit and student groups are illegally working on behalf of foreign nations and designated terrorist groups.

H.R. 6408 and S. 4136 are the culmination of these bad-faith attacks aimed at threatening and silencing houses of worship, nonprofit, and student advocacy groups speaking out for Palestinian human rights. While these attacks are sadly supported by too many members of Congress, such newly proposed authorities could one day be used to target any perceived enemy of any future presidential administration.

Issue Three:

Opposing Threats to Free Speech & Palestinian Human Rights: The Misleadingly Titled Antisemitism Awareness Act & Countering Antisemitism Act

Overview: CAIR and defenders of free speech are urging Congress to vote against the Countering Antisemitism Act (H.R.7921 / S.4091) and the Antisemitism Awareness Act (H.R.6090 / S.4127). These two bills would expand the definition of antisemitism to include legitimate criticism of Israel's human rights record, thereby silencing pro-Palestine activism.

Congress Must Oppose These Two Misleadingly Titled Acts Aimed at Silencing Pro-Palestinian Human Rights Activism:

- **Countering Antisemitism Act:** This act promotes the false notion that the pro-Palestine human rights movement is responsible for antisemitism. It proposes creating a national coordinator and federal interagency task force to combat antisemitism using an expansive definition designed to silence Palestinian human rights activists. This could increase state discrimination and target American Muslims, Arab Americans, and pro-Palestine supporters for speaking out against Israel's genocidal actions in Gaza and its West Bank policies of occupation and apartheid. The bill aims to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which threatens legitimate free speech regarding Israel's human rights violations.

Introduced By: Representatives Rep. Kathy Manning (D-NC) and Christopher Smith (R-NJ). Senators Jacky Rosen (D-NV) and James Lankford (R-OK).

- **Antisemitism Awareness Act:** Recently passed in the U.S. House of Representatives (H.R. 6090) and now being considered in the Senate, this act attempts to suppress and criminalize First Amendment-protected political speech in American schools by requiring the U.S. Department of Education to adopt the IHRA's misleading definition of antisemitism. If passed, it will stifle free speech on campus.

School administrations could also use the IHRA definition to justify disciplinary actions against students who engage in pro-Palestinian activism. Peaceful protests, distribution of literature, or organizing events that critique the Israeli government's genocidal policies could under the IHRA definition be

deemed antisemitic. Disciplinary actions can be taken that disproportionately affect students advocating for Palestinian rights, and therefore, create an environment of fear and suppression that deters students from participating in advocacy and activism.

The act disproportionately impacts the advocacy and rights of Muslim, Arab, Jewish, and Palestinian students, as well as their allies, who are more likely to speak out against Israeli policies. This targeted enforcement is discrimination and marginalization of these groups.

Introduced By: Representatives Michael Lawler (R-NY) and Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ). Senators Tim Scott (R-SC) & Pete Ricketts (R-NE).

Key Discussion Points:

Not Designed for Academic Freedom: Kenneth S. Stern, the original drafter of the IHRA definition, has called it a *“working definition” and testified to the U.S. Congress that if government bodies “enshrine this definition into law, outside groups will try and suppress – rather than answer – political speech they don’t like. The academy, Jewish students, and faculty teaching about Jewish issues will all suffer.”*

In a recent February 2024 editorial for the Boston Globe, titled **“I wrote a definition of antisemitism. It was never meant to chill free speech on campus”** Stern wrote:

“Increasingly, mainstream Jewish groups have been pushing lawmakers and universities to adopt what’s known as the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism on campus to chill or suppress much pro-Palestinian speech. I was the lead drafter of the 2005 text that became the 2016 IHRA definition. It was designed primarily for European data collectors to be able to craft reports over borders and time to measure the level of antisemitism. Examples were the heart of the definition to guide the data collection process. There were examples about Israel, not to label anyone an antisemite but because there was a correlation, as opposed to causation, between certain expressions and the climate for antisemitism. But it was never intended to be weaponized to muzzle campus free speech.”

CAIR, along with many Jewish scholars and activists reject the U.S. government adopting the IHRA’s definition of antisemitism because of its chilling effects on speech criticizing Israel’s human rights record – as does the definition’s original author. Congress and the U.S. government must re-evaluate its unquestionable support for this definition.

- **Chilling Effect on Free Speech:** Both bills threaten to freeze free speech, are opposed by progressive Jewish organizations like Jewish Voice for Peace and If Not Now, because it labels legitimate criticism of Israel’s human rights record as antisemitism.

- **Erosion of Democratic Values:** Fundamental democratic principles, such as the right to free speech and the right to protest, are at risk. These principles are enshrined in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which protects individuals' rights to express their opinions, particularly on matters of public concern, without fear of government retaliation or censorship.

Legal scholars and civil rights organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), have argued that overly broad definitions of antisemitism that encompass political speech about Israel can lead to unconstitutional restrictions on free expression. The ACLU has stated that such measures “imperil First Amendment freedoms” and “threaten to suppress a wide range of protected speech.”

- **Rise in Discrimination and Violence:** Supporters of Palestinian human rights have faced increased law enforcement and vigilante violence and discrimination. Some Palestinian Americans have been murdered or seriously injured due to this hostility. Wrongly criminalizing their free speech and pro-Palestinian activism will only lead to more violence and state persecution.

Section 5:

Reporting Your Congressional Meetings

To ensure we can effectively coordinate and follow up with congressional offices, we urge all members of the Muslim community to report their scheduled congressional meetings to CAIR. Your participation is a vital component of our collective effort to advocate for human rights and justice.

How to Report:

Email Us: Send details of your meeting to info@cair.com and use the **August Recess Meeting** as the subject line.

For any questions or further assistance, including tips on scheduling congressional meetings, what to say or do during meetings, and how to follow up effectively, please get in touch with CAIR's Government Affairs Department using the email address provided above.

A Prayer and Message of Thanks

On behalf of CAIR, as our American Muslim community members and allies embark on this Congressional August recess journey, we extend heartfelt prayers for a blessed and peaceful time of civic engagement and advocacy. Your steadfast commitment to justice and equality resonates deeply within our hearts and communities. May Allah (Subhanahu wa Ta'ala) grant you success in all your endeavors and bless you with strength and resilience.

For additional questions or information, please visit www.cair.com or email info@cair.com.