

Muslim American politicians descend on Markham for political organizing

A controversial Dearborn mayor is joining U.S. lawmakers for a panel on winning public office in Canada, courtesy of the Universal Muslim Association of America.

By Melanie Bennet | Juno News

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Hilton Toronto/Markham Suites Conference Centre & Spa. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

American politicians are scheduled to visit Markham, Ontario, next week to share advice on winning electoral seats at a convention aimed at increasing religious political representation.

The session, “From the Masjid to City Hall,” is part of the Universal Muslim Association of America’s annual convention. This year’s event speaks directly to prospective candidates, promising a discussion of campaigning, door-knocking, and the hostility candidates may face.



Promotional graphic for the “From the Masjid to City Hall” panel. Source: Instagram.

“The wave is not coming. It is already here,” UMAA says, referring to their hopes to see 100 Shia candidates among those expected to run in the 2028 U.S. elections.

The visit comes at an uneasy moment in Canada’s relationship with the United States. In a Léger survey conducted in late August, 41 per cent of Canadians described the U.S. as an enemy country. Nearly two-thirds said their impression would change if Donald Trump were no longer president.

Not only that, but cross-border religious candidate training has attracted the ire of Canada’s public broadcaster in the past - at least when they’re Christian.

During Ontario’s 2022 municipal elections, CBC reported on a Liberty Coalition Canada, a Christian group that partnered with Virginia-based Leadership Institute, calling them “U.S. political operatives.” Those operatives helped train Canadian Christians to run for city council and school board trustee positions.

Later in 2023, the CBC investigated Liberty Coalition’s ambition to recruit more Christian candidates and bring biblical principles into Canadian law.

“This movement is now increasingly involved in electoral politics, advocating for conservative social and political policies based on literal interpretations of the Bible,” the article said.

However, a search of CBC’s published coverage found no reporting on the upcoming UMAA panel.

Despite the lack of coverage, many of the speakers at the UMAA convention are considered controversial in the U.S. for engaging in religiously motivated politics.

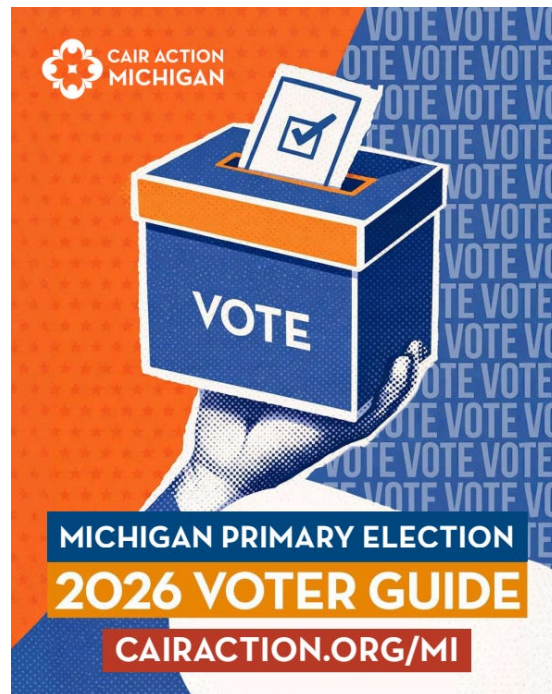
Most notable is Dearborn Mayor Abdullah Hammoud, who called a Christian minister Ted Barham an Islamophobe for objecting to honouring a jihadi terrorism supporter with a street sign.

Many of the speakers are involved with the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), members of which, quite famously, were named as unindicted co-conspirators in the Holy Land Foundation

terrorism financing trial over their roots in U.S. Muslim Brotherhood networks, which is a fundamentalist Islamic movement that advocates for a global caliphate.

Three of its four advertised panellists have received endorsements from CAIR Action, the political affiliate of the Council on American-Islamic Relations. The fourth works for CAIR Action in New Jersey.

Michigan state representative Alabas Farhat and Georgia state representative Akbar Ali are also on the panel. CAIR Action endorsed both men, as well as Hammoud, in their respective election campaigns.



CAIR Action Michigan graphic promoting its 2026 primary election voter guide. Source: CAIR Action.

Ali Aljarrah, the fourth panellist, is a senior adviser to CAIR Action who has been vocal about building “political power” through his work with CAIR Action New Jersey.

Rahat Husain, executive director of the U.S.-based Shia Muslim Foundation and a former UMAA policy director, will moderate.

Juno News has not received responses to our requests for comment.

UMAA’s convention runs from October 9th to 11th at the Hilton Toronto/Markham Suites Conference Centre.

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