

In the name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful.
All praise and thanks belong to God, the Lord of the Worlds.
May peace and prayers be upon Prophet Muhammad and his family.



The Council on American-Islamic Relations Texas
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February 9th, 2026

To: Texas State Senators
CC: Lt. Governor Dan Patrick
From: The Council on American-Islamic Relations Texas

Dear Texas State Senators:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations Texas (CAIR-TX), the Texas chapter of the nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, we write to urge your opposition to Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick's unconstitutional 2026 Texas Senate Interim Legislative Charge titled "**Preventing Sharia Law in Texas**" and address serious deficiencies within "**Promoting America & Texas First in Our Schools.**"

At the outset, we want to be clear about what should be uncontroversial. Texas and the United States are governed by the U.S. Constitution, the Texas Constitution, and duly enacted state and federal law. Courts in Texas may apply only those laws. No religious code, whether Islamic, Jewish, Catholic, or otherwise, has legal force in Texas courts.

We support equal rights, equal protection, and the rule of law as envisioned by the Founders and guaranteed by our constitutions. On that fundamental point, there is no disagreement.

Opposing Unconstitutional "Preventing Sharia Law in Texas"

The premise underlying the "*Preventing Sharia Law in Texas*" seeks to address a problem that does not exist. There is no parallel judicial system operating in Texas. Judges are constitutionally bound, and any deviation would already be unlawful and subject to immediate judicial remedy.

Because the legal system already functions exactly as described in the charge, the Texas state government repeatedly singling out Islamic religious practices and communities does not strengthen constitutional protections. Instead, it manufactures a fictional threat and then legislates against it. The result is not good governance, but the institutionalization of fear.

To be clear, "Sharia" is an Arabic word meaning "the way," and in practice refers to a broad religious and ethical framework that guides Muslims in matters such as prayer, fasting, charity, honesty in business, family obligations, and moral conduct. In Texas, it governs acts of worship and personal ethics, not civil authority. Sharia plays the same role for Muslim Texans that canon

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law plays for Catholic Texans and halacha plays for Jewish Texans. None of these religious traditions override the Constitution, and none can be imposed on others.

Yet only one faith is named and framed as a threat. That selective focus is not neutral. It marks Muslim belief as uniquely dangerous, alien, and incompatible with American life. Courts have already recognized the constitutional danger of such targeting. In *Awad v. Ziriax*, the U.S. Court of Appeals struck down Oklahoma’s “Save Our State” amendment because it expressly targeted Islam, violating the Establishment Clause and Equal Protection guarantees. Laws or policies that single out one religion for suspicion invite the same constitutional defects.

The national record reinforces this concern. The American Bar Association’s 2024 report, *Legalizing Othering: Institutionalized Islamophobia and the Subversion of U.S. Democracy*, documents more than 230 anti-Sharia measures introduced across the country since 2010, almost all in the absence of any documented legal problem. Scholars have shown these efforts to be part of a coordinated political strategy that uses fear of Muslims to mobilize voters, not to remedy gaps in the law.

The interim charge’s directive to also examine entities such as the proposed East Plano Islamic Center (“EPIC City”) also raises additional constitutional concerns. Texas already has robust, religion-neutral tools to investigate zoning compliance, financial misconduct, housing discrimination, and fraud. Those tools apply equally to every developer, religious, or secular.

Calling out a Muslim-led project by name, absent evidence of wrongdoing, risks transforming routine regulatory oversight into religious profiling. Legislative oversight must be based on demonstrable conduct, not religious identity. Targeting a specific faith community in an interim charge creates a legislative record that invites constitutional challenges and undermines equal protection.

This approach is inconsistent with conservative principles of limited government and neutral law enforcement.

Addressing the Misleadingly Titled “Promoting America & Texas First in Our Schools”

The charge on “Promoting America & Texas First in Our Schools” purports to emphasize protecting students from improper foreign government influence. However, framing civic education around suspicion of undefined “hostile agents” risks conflating lawful cultural,

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religious, or political expression with disloyalty. Such ambiguity invites viewpoint discrimination and chills constitutionally protected speech.

If Texas is concerned about foreign state influence in public schools, that concern must be applied consistently and without exception. Safeguards should be narrowly tailored, evidence-based, and focused on conduct, not identity or viewpoint, particularly where public resources, curriculum, or institutional partnerships are involved.

Texas schools can and should teach constitutional values, democratic principles, and civic responsibility without criminalizing religious identity, chilling speech, or reshaping public education to the perceived benefit of any foreign state.

CAIR-TX Recommendations

In light of the above, CAIR-TX respectfully urges the Texas Senate to consider the following recommendations:

With Regards the interim charge “Preventing Sharia Law in Texas”:

- Drop consideration of the interim charge titled “Preventing Sharia Law in Texas” in its entirety.
- In any future legislation or resolutions, cease the targeting of Muslim institutions or projects, including EPIC City, absent credible evidence of unlawful conduct.
- Maintain legislative neutrality toward religion, ensuring that oversight regulates conduct, not belief.
- Ensure all state and legislative investigations are conduct-based and evidence-driven, not premised on religious identity or political viewpoint.
- Avoid creating a legislative record that stigmatizes a single faith community and invites constitutional litigation.

With Regards to the interim charge “Promoting America & Texas First in Our Schools”:

- Any charge advancing “America & Texas First” should be constitutionally grounded and focused on conduct rather than identity or viewpoint. If that alignment cannot be achieved, it warrants reconsideration of the charge itself.”

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- In any future legislation or resolutions, define “foreign influence” narrowly and objectively as direct governmental control, direction, or funding—not lawful cultural, religious, educational, or civic engagement.
- Protect First Amendment rights and academic freedom by prohibiting viewpoint discrimination and ensuring that protected speech is not treated as evidence of disloyalty.
- Apply scrutiny of foreign government involvement consistently, without exemptions for any foreign state, where public resources, curriculum, or institutional partnerships are involved.
- Engage affected communities and constitutional experts before advancing any further interim charges or related legislation arising from this subject matter.
- If any of these standards cannot be met, the charge should be removed.

Texas is home to hundreds of thousands of Muslim families who are business owners, physicians, teachers, engineers, first responders, veterans, and public servants. They serve on PTAs, coach youth sports, run small businesses, raise their children to respect the law, and give back to their communities. They are not abstractions in a culture war. They are Texans.

The best way to defeat a ghost is not to chase it endlessly, but to recognize that it is not real. Texas law already protects everyone equally. Reaffirming that fact, without unconstitutionally singling out one religion as a threat, would strengthen liberty rather than undermine it.

Finally, we urge Texas leaders to reject fear-driven narratives and instead affirm what is already true: the Constitution works, the rule of law applies equally, and religious freedom belongs to all.

We welcome dialogue and would be honored to meet with you or your staff to discuss these issues further. We also invite you to visit a local mosque or community center to see firsthand the civic engagement, family life, and commitment to Texas values that define Muslim communities across our state.

Respectfully,

Council on American-Islamic Relations Texas (CAIR-TX)