

# FRIDAY BRIEF

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## Islamic Institute Elects New Board Members

The Islamic Institute has elected four new board members, and has appointed a new Chairman of the Board of Directors, founder and former Executive Director Khaled Saffuri. In its annual meeting, the previous board bid farewell to several members who have moved on to positions in government and the new administration. The new members elected to replace the outgoing members were Hanif Akhtar, Othman Siddiqui, Ali Jawad, and Khaled Kader.

Also, Mr. Talat Othman completed his two-year service as the Chairman of the Board. During his tenure, the Islamic Institute experienced a great period of growth in which the organization participated in numerous projects to promote the interests of the Muslim American community to decision-makers and increase cooperation with the community on various issues of concern. Mr. Othman will continue to serve as a Board Member for the Institute.

Khaled Saffuri has been elected as the new Chairman of the Board, and will continue his tradition of commitment to the success of the Institute. Mr. Saffuri founded the organization in 1998, and served as Executive Director until 2001.

The Institute would like to congratulate Mr. Saffuri on his new position, and would like to thank Mr. Talat Othman for his dedication and service as Chairman in advancing the growth and goals of the Institute.

## Religious Accommodation in the Workplace

An issue expected to be pressed in the second session of the 107th Congress this year is the problem of religious accommodation for employees. In recent years, this problem has affected Americans of many faiths, including Muslims attempting to observe the tenets of their faith while at the workplace.

A bipartisan group of religious and ethnic organizations have pushed, along with a similar group of Senators and Representatives in Congress for the passage of the American Worker's Religious Liberty Act of 2001. The legislation does not seek to introduce a new concept into law. Rather, it seeks to restore to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 the original congressional intent that required employers to "reasonably accommodate" the religious practices of employees, insofar as doing so did not impose an "undue hardship" on the employer. A series of federal court opinions have, essentially, read this protection out of the law. However, in the last 10 years the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has reported a consistent increase in claims filed for religiously-based employment discrimination.

The legislation does not give employees a blank check to demand any accommodation in the name of religion and receive it. Rather, it restores the standard that an employer should reasonably accommodate its employee's religious needs so long as it does not impose significant difficulty or expense on their business.

We encourage the community to be vocal on this issue, as it is one that has affected many Muslim Americans in the wake of the terrorist attacks against our country. Letting your congressional representatives know your opinions of this important legislation will help to bring it the attention it deserves.