

# FRIDAY BRIEF

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## President Sends Greetings; DC Mosques Celebrate Eid

On Thursday, President Bush sent out a message of greetings to the Muslim American community in observance of the Eid Al-Adha holiday. "During this special time," says the President, "our Nation is reminded of the remarkable contributions of American Muslims to our history, culture, and way of life. Our spiritual foundation and common heritage will continue to guide us as we strive to strengthen our country and advance peace and goodness in our world."

Several mosques in the Washington, DC, metro area are coordinating to celebrate the Eid on Friday, February 22. Prayers and festivities will be held at the DC Armory east of Capitol Hill. Prayers and khutba will begin at 7:00 am, and continue until 11:30 am. Celebrations will begin at 8:00 am and continue to 5:30 pm. More information regarding festivities and prayer schedules can be found on the DC Area Eid Committee website at [www.dceid.org](http://www.dceid.org).

The Islamic Institute would like to send greetings and best wishes to Muslims in the United States and around the world as we prepare to celebrate Eid Al- Adha.

## School Choice Case Heard at Supreme Court

A landmark case for the cause of school choice was heard by the Supreme Court on Wednesday. The court heard arguments regarding the constitutionality of a Cleveland, Ohio, school choice program in which children who attend failing schools use government issued vouchers to go to private schools. A previous U.S. Court of Appeals ruling struck down the program on the grounds that it violated constitutional church-state separation. The case was then appealed to the Supreme Court. Over 4,000 children, including children from several Muslim American families, attend private schools with publicly funded scholarships in Cleveland. The students, mostly from low-income families, get tuition vouchers for up to \$2,500 to attend other private or public schools if their parents decide local schools do not meet their needs.

A large rally of several hundred people formed on the steps of the Supreme Court building in support of the Cleveland families as the case was heard by the justices. Families from Cleveland and other cities whose children use vouchers for their educational needs attended, as well as members of the Islamic Institute and many other organizations who support school choice initiatives. The justices are expected to make a decision on the case in June. The Cleveland program will continue until the ruling comes down.

## New Jersey Chapter President Offers Benediction at Interfaith Breakfast

The President of the Islamic Institute's New Jersey chapter, Hamdi Rifai, attended the 16th Annual Interfaith Brotherhood-Sisterhood Breakfast in Teaneck, New Jersey, on Monday. The event brings together representatives of many different faith communities in New Jersey as well as local, state, and federal officials, to promote understanding and dialogue to improve their communities. Mr. Rifai gave the opening benediction, and stressed the importance of the dialogue the breakfast represents in emphasizing the similarities of the Abrahamic faiths: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. "This is a very beneficial event for the communities of New Jersey," said Rifai afterward. "Bringing together imams, rabbis, and priests as well as members of their communities to discuss issues of justice, tolerance, and equality is greatly needed during this difficult time for our country."

Over 1,000 people attended the breakfast, including New Jersey Senator John Corzine, State Assemblywoman Loretta Weinberg, Bergen County Executive William Schuber, Akram Yosri, candidate for the U.S. Congress from the 5th district of New Jersey, Rabbi Neal Borovitz, of Temple Shalom in Riveredge, and Reverend Donald Sheehan of St. Matthew's Church in Ritchfield.