



STATE OF TENNESSEE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CLAUDE RAMSEY
DEPUTY TO THE GOVERNOR
AND CHIEF OF STAFF

BILL HASLAM
GOVERNOR

August 15, 2012

Mr. Chris Devaney
Chairman
Tennessee Republican Party
2424 21st Avenue South, Suite 200
Nashville, TN 37212

Dear Chairman Devaney,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information to members of the State Executive Committee and County Republican Party Chairmen to clear up any confusion or concerns regarding several issues that have been brought to our attention.

I want to start by clearly expressing that there is no effort by the Haslam administration, the State of Tennessee, or any agency or department of the State to promote or advance Sharia law or Sharia compliant finance. The promotion or advancement of religious ideology is an inappropriate role of state government that is unacceptable, and will not happen during this administration.

Our job is to provide services to Tennessee taxpayers that they aren't able to get on their own in a customer-focused, effective and efficient way at the lowest cost.

Part of doing that job is working with and listening to Tennesseans, and we've heard specific concerns about the creation of an American Muslim Advisory Council. It is important to know that the Council was created by the community, not by the State of Tennessee. Neither the Governor, Commissioner, nor the Legislature has a role in making appointments to the group. It has no official status with the State.

The Department of Safety and Homeland Security was invited by the Council to participate in discussions of community issues, and Commissioner Bill Gibbons found that to be a useful dialogue for law enforcement officials.

We have also heard concerns regarding training by this group performed with Department of Children's Services employees. The staff at DCS engages homes across the state

with a wide range of issues. The staff requested guidance, and the Department asked AMAC to offer specific training related to these cultural, not legal, differences.

We have also heard specific concerns about Samar Ali, a bright, young Tennessean that Commissioner Bill Hagerty brought on board to oversee the Department of Economic and Community Development's international activities. Her job is to help Tennessee businesses expand their markets to sell local Tennessee products around the world in countries like China and Canada, and recruiting new businesses to Tennessee from countries like Japan. Expanded markets and higher sales of Tennessee products mean more jobs for Tennesseans.

There is nothing about the Department or the position that involves Islamic financing or Sharia law. The Department's role is to recruit businesses to bring jobs to Tennessee and to grow jobs in Tennessee.

Samar is a native Tennessean. She served as a White House Fellow, a very prestigious honor that is a bi-partisan and merit-based appointment made by a panel of former fellows, national businesses and public policy leaders from both political parties. As a fellow, she received top-security clearance from the federal government, passing the highest levels of security screening, to work with the Department of Homeland Security and National Security Council on counter-terrorism efforts. Her father is a past President of the Tennessee Medical Association. He served our country during Vietnam and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel from the U.S. Army Reserve (Medical Corps). Her brother works for NASA and led the software team that put rovers on Mars.

This is a very accomplished and visible Tennessee family.

I hope this information is helpful in addressing some of the confusion and concerns that have been brought to our attention. We look forward to continue working together to make Tennessee the best place in the nation to live, work and raise a family. If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to give me a call at 615-741-2001.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Claude Ramsey", written in a cursive style.

Claude Ramsey
Deputy Governor