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chair of the civil rights

committee of the Dallas

County Democratic Party added, "Political in-

timidation will not work

just as it has not worked

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North Dallas Gazette is

# **Texas Minority Leaders Feel Muslims Are Unfairly Targeted**

By Audrey A. Lundy (North Dallas Gazette/ NNPA Member)

uslims have lived in Texas since 1854. They have established mosques, schools and other institutions that serve the greater community. Like most residents, they are proud Texans and Americans, according to Omar Suleiman, who serves as the Resident Scholar of the Valley Ranch Islamic Center in Irving, Texas.

"In the over 150 years that this community has been here, never has there been a problem with the Muslim community trying to overthrow the system," he said. "Not once has there been a Muslim promoting any-

cil," Rep. Biedermann stated in the press release. "We have a responsibility as Texans to secure our border and to protect against the serious, and growing, threats of terrorism."

Community leaders said Rep. Biedermann should spend more time building relationships with the Muslim community and speaking out against racists and xenophobes.

"Texas strength is in its diversity. This is one of the most diverse states in the country and that is what makes us strong," said Sahar Aziz, a board member of the ACLU of Texas during last week's press conference. "If he truly cares about Texas, then he should be defending the religious freedom



Irving Mayor Beth Van Duyne (center) speaks at the summit entitled, "Defending Against Radical Islamic Terrorism in Texas" in Austin, Texas.

lier this month by Rep. Biedermann requesting their response.

## • Not once has there been a Muslim promoting anything unconstitutional that infringes on the rights of our friends and neighbors. These aren't alternate facts; they're just facts'

thing unconstitutional rights of all Texans of all that infringes on the rights of our friends and neighbors. These aren't alternate facts; they're just facts."

Last Wednesday, Suleiman with a group of interfaith and civil rights leaders held a press conference at Irving City Hall to oppose a summit spearheaded by Texas State Representative Kyle Biedermann and supported by Irving Mayor Beth Van Duyne.

The summit entitled. "Defending Against Radical Islamic Terrorism in Texas" took place at the state capitol last week. Community leaders in attendance at the press conference believe the

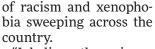
faiths."

Hispanic activist Carlos Quintanilla said Mayor Van Duyne should also stop the rhetoric and support the large Hispanic and Muslim communities in Irving.

"We need to send a message to Mayor Beth Van Duyne that the City of Irving constituents will not tolerate hatred," said Quintanilla, the leader of Accion America.

"We have never seen any radical Islamic behavior in Irving and we need to share that type of awareness with the community. Irving has a large minority community that includes Muslims and hate mongering

"The representative didn't reach out to us through one of the many mosques in Texas. Some [mosques are] in his own district," Suleiman said during the press conference last week. "Instead, he decided to put us through a litmus test that is grounded in intimidation. These loyalty tests are not new in America. and they essentially imply a second-class citizenship on the part of those who receive them. We reject that status and characterization. By sending us these letters dictated by Xenophobes and hate groups not even based in our state, he is negating decade of interfaith dialogue, multifaith cooperation and civic engagement here in Texas."



"I believe there is an assault on our civil liberties that were secured for us. in blood, by generations of soldiers and generations of activists," said Waters, a pastor of Joy Tabernacle A.M.E. Church in South Dallas. "I believe Muslims are being targeted."

Shayan Elahi, an American Muslim who is the

## EAST PORTLAND ACTION PLAN ADVOCATE (PROGRAM COORDINATOR)

ties."

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summit unfairly targeted Muslims.

However, Rep. Biedermann disagrees with the community leaders. The North Dallas Gazette sent Rep. Biedermann's office questions related to this story. Even though staffers at Biedermann's lims office acknowledged receipt of the questions, they went unanswered; staffers instead sent a press release about the summit.

"With the rise of radical Islamic terrorism throughout the world, our homeland security must be our top priority. When I took office, I assembled a Law Enforcement and Homeland Security Advisory Counis not acceptable."

The North Dallas Gazette also sent Mayor Van Duyne's office a series of questions for this article, but her staffers also declined to offer a response for this story. said Mus-elcome today! · Like us on today. · lear of the second sec Suleiman said Muswelcome

government officials to visit mosques to get to know

in them the spirit of friendship and not suspicion. He said that

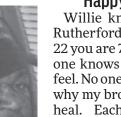
reject a privately funded poll sent out to Muslim groups ear-

Dr. Michael W. Waters, who also attended the press conference, said he is concerned about the growing acceptance



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Willie Rutherford



"Happy Birthday" Willie known as George Rutherford today February 22 you are 76 yrs old and no one knows the emptiness I feel. No one can understand why my broken heart won't heal. Each day that we're apart you are forever present in my heart.

In the darkness of the night I yearn for your arms

to hold me tight. It broke my heart to lose you but you didn't go alone, a part of me went with you the day God called you home. Many times I cried, if love could have saved you, you never would have died. Now that you're gone and your actions have ceased, we want you to know that we love you and may your soul rest in peace.

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