

How Muslim voters of Virginia are thinking in 2007

During early June to mid July, 2007, VMPAC conducted surveys in various community and mosque events in Northern Virginia. From a list of 15 issues for county elections and 15 issues for state elections, here is how 782 Muslim registered voters selected their issues of concern:

At the **county level**, the 5 most important issues were:

Anti-immigrant resolutions: 96% were concerned about anti-immigrant resolutions at the county level – As in many ethnic communities, Muslims in Virginia expressed worries about the new efforts to allow local police/sheriff to do immigration enforcement, and possible profiling and civil rights violations.

Education: 93% thought education was an important issue – Good school systems and proper funding for those were a top priority for the Muslim community.

Support for diversity: 92% felt support for diversity by candidates was essential – Muslim voters are eager to know which county candidates have a strong commitment to diversity.

Cuts in social services: 84% had opposition to cuts in social services – Muslim voters were opposed to cuts in county social services, like county health services, etc.

Traffic congestions: 72% felt that local traffic congestions were a serious problem.

At the **state level**, the 5 most important issues were:

Anti-immigrant legislations: 95% were concerned about anti-immigrant legislations at the state level – As in many ethnic communities, Muslims in Virginia expressed worries about the new efforts to allow state police to do immigration enforcement, and possible profiling and civil rights violations.

Support for diversity: 93% felt support for diversity by candidates was essential – Muslim voters are eager to know which House and Senate candidates have a strong commitment to diversity.

Payday lending: 82% thought payday lending was wrong and needed to be controlled – Since payday lending practices rely heavily on usury (which is forbidden in Islam), Muslim voters felt strongly against those. For Muslim voters, it was at once a religious and a social justice issue.

Cuts in social services: 79% had opposition to cuts in social services – Muslim voters were opposed to cuts in state social services, like healthcare and other state programs.

Traffic congestions: 76% thought highway traffic congestions were a serious problem.

Other observations:

Education was considered a state-level issue of importance by 62%.

Among issues which are commonly associated with religious communities, only 8% thought gay marriage and 9% thought abortion were important election/political issues.

Growth of Muslim voters in Virginia

The first Muslim PAC in Virginia, Platform for Active Civic Empowerment (PACE), created a database from the State Board of Elections (SBE) voter file of Muslim voters in Northern Virginia (Fairfax, Alexandria, Arlington, Loudoun, Prince William) in 2003 consisting of 41 thousand voters.

After consolidation of Muslim PACs under the name VMPAC in 2005, a new database was created from the SBE voter file. This time, all of Virginia was considered. While Northern Virginia had over 44 thousand Muslim voters, over 7 thousand voters were identified from the rest of the Commonwealth. The newly completed 2007 voter roll shows over 56 thousand and almost 9 thousand voters for those respective areas.

Incidentally, while Fairfax County remains the largest concentration Muslim voters in Virginia, Prince William County has experienced the fastest growth rate.

Here are total number of Muslim voters by county in Northern Virginia and the rest of the Commonwealth:

YEAR	2003	2005	2006	2007
Fairfax	16,772	17,374	18,496	19,873
Alexandria	6,753	7,047	7,482	7,814
Arlington	3,867	3,971	4,170	4,387
Loudoun	8,193	9,637	11,969	12,854
Prince William	5,417	6,571	9,772	11,202
NoVA	41,002	44,600	51,889	56,130
Other VA	NA	7,221	7,754	8,952
TOTAL	NA	51,821	59,643	65,082

Virginia Muslim Political Action Committee (VMPAC)

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Virginia Muslim Political Action Committee (VMPAC) is a registered non-partisan Political Action Committee of Muslim Americans living in Virginia. VMPAC was formed in May 2005 as a coalition of several active Virginian PACs. Its goal is to educate and involve the Muslim community to participate in the political process of the Commonwealth through mobilization of votes and funds for issues which are important to the community and candidates who support those issues.

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