

Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council Urges Congress to Adopt Protecting Religiously Affiliated Institutions Act

June 6, 2017—Washington, D.C.—The Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council today urged members of Congress to pass the Protecting Religiously Affiliated Institutions Act of 2017.

Introduced in the Senate (S. 994) and the House (H.R. 1730), with bipartisan sponsors, it would amend the Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996, which makes acts against houses of worship resulting in damage a federal crime.

The new bill would expand the federal hate crimes statute to include religiously-affiliated institutions, such as schools and community centers, in addition to houses of worship. It would extend the statute to include threats as well acts, and expand the punishment for damage to protected property from the current one year (misdemeanor) to five years (felony).

“Burning down a mosque or vandalizing a Jewish cemetery is intolerable. Now is the time to take action against hate crimes in our country,” said Council Co-Chair Stanley M. Bergman.

“We support the bill’s bipartisan sponsors in the Senate and the House of Representatives, who are taking direct action to increase the prosecution of hate crimes,” said Co-Chair Farooq Kathwari.

The Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council brings together 42 civil society, religious, and business leaders from across the United States to advocate for domestic policy issues of common concern to the American Jewish and American Muslim communities. Reversing the recent rise in hate crimes, and promoting the place of religious minorities in American society, are its top priorities.

In February the Council held a series of meetings on Capitol Hill with Democratic and Republican members of the House and Senate to raise awareness about the Council, its members and mission, and to urge lawmakers to work to strengthen the country’s response to the increase in hate crimes across the U.S., especially those targeting Muslim and Jewish communities and institutions.