

Local Muslim group promotes wider participation in politics

BY RENEE C. LEE
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ARLINGTON — Hamed Madani believes the Muslim community is a perfect example of taxation without representation.

Though there are 521,000 elected positions at the local, state and federal levels few if any Muslims have been elected, said Madani, president of the Dallas/Fort Worth American Muslim Alliance. "As a minority we'd like to coauthor the American dream in the future."

One way to do that, he said, is through efforts like the American Muslim Alliance, formed in 1992 to get the Muslim community involved in politics.

The local chapter was formed last year to educate an estimated 100,000 Muslims in the Metroplex, he said. Madani, a political science professor at the Tarrant County Junior College Southeast Campus, said the group's first big event was December's convention at University of Texas at Arlington. Political party activists and candidates were invited to visit with alliance members from across the state to discuss platforms and issues.

Saturday, the group, along with several other Muslim organizations, will host a candidates forum at UT-Arlington.

Confirmed candidates include:

"When they come here they are hesitant and afraid of negative repercussion."

— Hamed Madani
President of alliance

Janet Richardson, independent candidate for Congressional District 6; U.S. Rep. Martin Frost, D-Dallas; Craig Murphy, representing Rep. Joe Barton, R-Ennis; Paul Truax, chairman of the Reform Party of Texas; Betty Johnson of



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Hamed Madani, seated, along with Sied Ahsani, Ollie Jefferson and Dr. Basheer Ahmed, are involved in organizing a candidate forum.

A candidate forum will be at 10 a.m. Saturday in the Architecture Building, 501 Nedderman Drive, Room 204. The even is free and open to the public.

ness consultant and chairman of the state alliance, said Texas' Muslim population of about 1 million is the nation's second largest.

Ahsani said many Muslims have been so focused on economic security that they have ignored politics.

"But now that they are settling down and gaining citizenship, they would like to get involved in local politics, to be in the city council and state legislature, where they can contribute to local issues," he said.

But another reason many Muslims aren't politically active is that they lack political socialization, Madani said. Many Muslims come from countries where there was a dictatorship or autocratic government.

The alliance helps Muslims through the citizenship process and then gets them to register to vote. It also hosts seminars and workshops on how the U.S. government and election process works. It also tries to identify and address issues that affect the Muslim community. One of the most recent concerns was immigration reform recently signed into law.

In February, the group sponsored a petition drive that asked Muslims to write their elected officials and urge them not to oppose specific components of the immigration bill.

When the bill was passed, there were two portions that the alliance was glad to see struck down. One would have denied the children of immigrants a public education, and the other would have required businesses to pay a 10 percent or \$10,000 surcharge for hiring foreign workers.

Madani said the group also wants to work to destroy Muslim stereo-