

Alliance  
of Baptists

March 8, 2011

American  
Baptist  
Churches USA

The Honorable Peter King  
Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security  
United States House of Representatives  
H2-176 Ford House Office Building  
300 D Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Baptist General  
Association  
of Virginia

Baptist General  
Conference

Dear Mr. Chairman,

Baptist General  
Convention  
of Texas

I write as the Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty (“BJC”), a 75 year-old education and advocacy organization committed to defending and extending religious liberty for all and maintaining the institutional separation of church and state. We champion our Baptist heritage, which emphasizes that religion must be freely exercised, neither advanced nor inhibited by government. The BJC serves 15 Baptist bodies and thousands of individuals and churches in New York state and nationwide.

CBF of North  
Carolina

Cooperative  
Baptist  
Fellowship

National  
Baptist  
Convention  
of America

We urge you to broaden the scope of your planned hearing on the “radicalization” of American Muslims. The actual or implied allegation that terrorist threats to the American people result from one religious group is an insult to the millions of peaceful Muslim American citizens and an affront to the religious liberty protections of our Constitution.

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Baptist  
Convention  
U.S.A. Inc.

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Missionary  
Baptist  
Convention

You were quoted in *The New York Times* as saying that the inclusion of terrorist groups associated with other religions would “dilute the hearing.”<sup>1</sup> To the contrary, the hearing will send a message that Muslims present a greater threat of terrorism than other religions. Further, it would imply that the potential for terrorism from outside of Islam is not significant enough to merit a hearing. Highlighting only one potential “breeding ground” for terrorism ignores the reality that other sources of terrorism exist.

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National Baptist  
Convention Inc.

We recognize that religion is sometimes the impetus for committing acts of terrorism. History books are replete with examples of the atrocities that human beings have perpetrated in the name of their particular faith—be it Islam, Christianity or a host of other faiths. While the BJC applauds your committee’s mandate to investigate terrorist threats, singling out a particular religion sets an unfortunate precedent. A sweeping, general equation of terrorism with Islam—or any religion—is both dangerous and disingenuous. It is a suggestion that plays on a

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widespread misunderstanding of the Muslim faith, and it encourages the American people to view extremist outliers in Islam as representative of the entire faith. That would set a troubling standard that could lead to further discrimination against all faiths.

Thank you for your consideration of the BJC's objections to this proposed hearing. We believe that the specific targeting of any religion belies the principles and values underlying the constitutional protection of religious liberty that has served Americans so well for more than two centuries. I sincerely hope that you will broaden the scope of your hearing to address all sources of terrorism—religious and otherwise.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Brent Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

J. Brent Walker  
Executive Director

CC: The Honorable Bennie Thompson  
Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland Security  
United States House of Representatives  
H2-117 Ford House Office Building  
300 D Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Members of the Committee on Homeland Security  
United States House of Representatives

<sup>1</sup> New York Times, February 7, 2011.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/08/us/politics/08muslim.html?partner=rss&emc=rss>