

# Religious Test

## Should American Muslims be allowed to build a mosque and community center near the site of Ground Zero?

A proposal to build an Islamic community center and mosque in lower Manhattan, two blocks from Ground Zero, touched off a firestorm of controversy this summer and has become a divisive issue in the 2010 midterm elections.

Supporters of the project say the First Amendment's protection of religious freedom means that Muslims have the same right to practice their beliefs as anyone else. That includes the right of



project developers, who have received the approval of local authorities, to build a mosque on land they legally own.

Critics of the project, including many relatives of victims of the 9/11 attacks, say that the location of the project is inappropriate and offensive. They maintain that other, less raw locations are available and that building a mosque near Ground Zero represents a symbolic victory for the radical Muslim terrorists who committed the 9/11 attacks.

## Should American Muslims be allowed to build a mosque and community center near the site of Ground Zero?

### YES

- Building a mosque at that location affirms a commitment to the fundamental American value of religious freedom protected by the Constitution.
- The building is an opportunity for Muslims to demonstrate peaceful Islamic values and will be an emblem of American commitment to religious tolerance and cultural diversity.
- The issue is one of legal rights and community control. A local community board has approved the project, and the private developers have the legal right to proceed.

### NO

- Out of sensitivity to the families of the nearly 3,000 people killed in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, the community center should not be built so close to Ground Zero.
- Building a mosque in that particular location is a deliberate provocation and symbolic monument to the radical Muslim terrorists who committed the 9/11 attacks.
- A majority of Americans oppose construction, and proceeding with the project is more likely to harm interfaith relations than promote religious understanding.