

participation actively sought after. A key to greater effectiveness is improved coordination of activities among CAIR's allies and chapters, something which improved in this period but for which there is still a long way to go before we are really effective. Many of the initial startup difficulties are past, and the Governmental Affairs Department better understands the workings and personalities of the civil rights and Capitol Hill communities. There is much to be learned and many wrinkles to be ironed out before we are a truly efficient and effective lobbying office.

Problems: The greatest problem continues to be general work overload. The competing interests of dealing with new legislative initiatives, meetings, political developments, attacks on American Muslim political activity and general program administration cause occasional inefficiency and leads to many lost opportunities. With the large number of issues to deal with and a still incomplete information gathering capability it is frequently difficult to prioritize work effectively. Another major problem continues to be follow-through. Oftentimes the department initiates work on a particular issue only to be forced to leave it and work on other issues. This makes the department less effective than it could be. Community pressure to work on international issues also causes a decreased capacity to effectively deal with the domestic civil rights challenges that should be at the heart of CAIR's work. There is also the problem of the general stigma that has now been attached to all American Muslim political organizations, and the general demise of other Muslim political organizations, particularly AMC and MPAC. Until these organizations can regroup CAIR appears to be the only remaining Washington-based advocacy organization with a regular presence in the field of politics.

- B. **Future:** The Governmental Affairs Department should focus on better coordination of activities with the chapters, and strengthening our capacity to work in a concerted and unified way. This can be accomplished through more regular communication with the governmental affairs representatives in the chapters and greater utilization of the Capitol Advantage website. We plan to begin developing more policy briefs and regular commentaries on political developments as materials we can use on the Hill, but also to continue offering our own perspective on issues of concern. We also need to decide on a few issues to focus on and stick with them. For example, the issue of Gujarat seems to have a lot of potential, and it takes time to set up meetings, follow-up, call back, etc. To focus on Gujarat means to diminish attention on other areas. A domestic issue that we should perhaps focus on again is secret evidence, whereby our office visits to congress are only on these issues, and we focus our policy briefs and legislative efforts on these two issues, while supporting the work on others on other issues of concern. The issue of secret evidence, sealed affidavits, secret detentions, secret hearings and secret searches touch on a lot of the issues we are facing, and may be a more effective way to concentrate our concerns.

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Date: June 28, 2002