

Zulfat Suara

Zulfat was elected as an at large council member in September 2019. With over 34 thousand votes from a diverse population, she became the first Muslim elected to the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County and the first immigrant elected to an at-large position. She is the first Muslim woman elected in the State of Tennessee and the first Nigerian woman elected to any office in the United States.

In office, Councilmember Suara has been a fierce advocate for human rights while serving as chair of the Affordable Housing committee, vice-chair of the education committee and member of the Budget/Finance, Audit, and the Personnel/Public Relation committees. In 2021, Zulfat spearheaded the effort to honor the late congressman while simultaneously highlighting Nashville's role in the civil rights movement. Working with the minority caucus and other community leaders, she sponsored a city ordinance in November 2020 to rename Fifth Avenue from Jefferson Street to I-40 to Rep. John Lewis Way

Zulfat Suara is originally from Nigeria but came to the U.S. in 1993 and chose to make Tennessee her home when the opportunity for her husband to do a fellowship at Vanderbilt presented itself. She has been active in community service and leadership since she moved here in 1998, all while working full-time as a CPA. Zulfat founded an accounting firm that has worked with county governments in Hardeman, Haywood, Lake, and McNairy counties. She is currently the Executive Director of Grants and Contracts at Meharry Medical College.

Always active in her community, she started the Hardeman County Chapter of Junior Achievement in 2004 and continues to advocate for children and young people as a board member of the PENCIL Foundation. Zulfat has served in several leadership positions, including the chair of the American Muslim Advisory Council. She has supported women, serving two terms as State President of the Business and Professional Women, a century-old organization promoting equity for all women in the workplace, from 2009-2011.

She is active politically as treasurer of the National Women's Political Caucus and chair of the Tennessee Women's Day on the Hill. She has also been a speaker at the Nashville Women's March each year since 2017. She served as Tennessee state co-chairs for Bernie Sanders campaign. She is a PLEO delegate to the Democratic National Convention and member of the DNC Platform committee.

Zulfat was named the 2021 Women of the Year by the Davidson County Democratic Women and was inducted into the YWCA Academy for Women of Achievement on February 22, 2022. She was recognized with the FBI Directors' Community Leadership Award and featured in the Jackson Sun's Twenty Most Influential Women in West Tennessee. Zulfat was named the 2018 Muslim Policy Advocate of the Year by Islamic Society of North America. Zulfat received an award for Outstanding Service to Human Rights from the TN Human Rights Commission and The Tennessee Economic Council on Women inducted her into its Tennessee Women Hall of Fame.

On July 1, 2020, she received the Mary Hatwood Futrell Civil and Human Rights award from the National Education Association- an award received by former First Lady Michelle Obama in 2018. She is an alum of Leadership Nashville and a member of the current class of Leadership Tennessee

Her TEDx talk on “Building Power Where You Seemingly Do Not Belong” was voted #10 most watched TEDx talk in the world in the month of October 2021

She is married to her wonderful husband of 32 years - Dr. Rahaman Suara and they are blessed with five amazing children.