

People

News in the [October 3, 2006](#) issue

Minnesota lawmaker **Keith Ellison** won the Democratic primary for his Minneapolis-area congressional district September 12, paving the way for him to become the first Muslim in Congress. Ellison, who was elected as a state representative in 2002, took 41 percent of the vote, beating six other contenders in the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, according to the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. Ellison, 43, who is black, converted to Islam as a college student. A strong critic of the Iraq war, Ellison is considered the favorite in the liberal district.

The top three journalistic prizes of the Religion Newswriters Association were awarded last month to **Gary Stern** of the *Journal News* in White Plains, New York; **Douglas Todd** of the *Vancouver Sun* in British Columbia; and **Robert Sibley** of the *Ottawa Citizen*, another Canadian newspaper. Also, RNA executive director **Debra L. Mason** said she will become in 2008 the new director of the Center for Religion, the Professions & the Public at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Moving the organization's office and archives from the Columbus, Ohio, area will be delayed partly because the facility to house the office is being built on campus. The center's mission is to improve religious literacy among the professions.

Presbyterian minister **Janet Edwards** of Pittsburgh was charged September 12 by officials in her presbytery of violating a ban against same-sex weddings when she presided over the marriage of two women in June 2005. Edwards, a descendant of Puritan preacher Jonathan Edwards, will face penalties ranging from rebuke to defrocking if she is brought to trial and convicted. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) allows the blessing of same-sex unions that are not equated with heterosexual marriage.