First Muslim woman elected as speaker in German state parliament

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Germany has elected its first Muslim woman as the speaker of a state parliament.

Green Party politician, Muhterem Aras, won the post in Baden-Württemberg from a member of a populist anti-immigration party on Wednesday. Aras was elected as "Landtagspräsident" by 96 local MPs, becoming the first Muslim woman to take the office.

"We wrote history today," she said after winning with a significant majority. Aras, 50, said her victory sent a message of "openness, tolerance and successful integration" and vowed a lively but fair debating culture in the chamber, according to *The Local* .

Obama, Merkel make case for huge US-EU trade deal

Originally from Turkey, Aras moved to Germany along with her parents as a child and studied economics before she found her own tax advice firm.

Aras' political career began in 1992, when she stood for the Greens on the local council and rose through the local party to become its leader.

In contrast, members of the anti-immigration party Alternative for Germany (AfD) refused to join the applause during Aras' first session as speaker, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported.

Earlier this month, the party enjoyed record success in local elections on a policy that claimed Islam was not compatible with the country's constitution and called for a ban on minarets and the burqa.

The Greens will govern as the largest coalition party with Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) as their junior partners.

It is the first time in the history of the Federal Republic that a party other than the CDU or the centre left Social Democratic Party (SPD) has won the popular vote in a state election.

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