

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 1022

Expressing support for the recognition of April as Arab American Heritage Month and celebrating the heritage and culture of Arab Americans in the United States.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 1, 2022

Ms. TLAIB (for herself and Mrs. DINGELL) submitted the following resolution;
which was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Reform

RESOLUTION

Expressing support for the recognition of April as Arab American Heritage Month and celebrating the heritage and culture of Arab Americans in the United States.

Whereas, every April, the United States celebrates Arab American Heritage Month;

Whereas, since migrating to the United States, people of Arab descent have shared their rich culture and traditions with neighbors and friends, while also setting fine examples of model citizens and public servants;

Whereas Arab Americans have brought with them to the United States their resilient family values, strong work ethic, dedication to education, and diversity in faith and creed that have added strength to our democracy;

Whereas, for over a century, Arab Americans have been making valuable contributions to every aspect of American society—in medicine, law, business, technology, civic engagement, government, and culture;

Whereas Arab Americans contribute to our country's unique diversity through the process of attaining citizenship and integration, as modeled by the family of Dr. Joseph Arbeely, the first recorded Arab family to come to the United States with the intention of becoming citizens, and whose two sons, Najeeb and Ibrahim, went on to establish the first Arabic language newspaper in the United States (Kawkwab America);

Whereas Americans of Arab descent helped grow this country through the development of industry and free enterprise, as in the case of world fairs, which attracted many immigrants from the Arab world;

Whereas historical Arab-American communities boasted dozens of restaurants and grocery stores, newspapers, in both Arabic and English, houses of worship, as well as numerous manufacturers, importers, and purveyors of women's clothing, as in the case of the first major Arab-American community, "Little Syria", which was depicted in Ameen Rihani's 1911 masterpiece, "The Book of Khalid";

Whereas the growth and development of Arab-American communities transforms and enriches all areas of American civic, social, and political life, including in the areas of religious pluralism, poetry and philosophy, and journalism, to name just a few;

Whereas Joseph Howar, a Palestinian American born in 1879 as Mohammad Issa Abu Al Hawa who worked in

the United States as a peddler before becoming a real estate developer whose contributions include the Islamic Center of Washington, DC, the first mosque in the city, demonstrates the transformational quality of Arab-American contributions to American society;

Whereas Arab-American poet Kahlil Gibran's 1923 masterpiece, "The Prophet", was a transformative piece of literature which discusses topics of the human condition in the most eloquent of ways by highlighting inclusion and understanding of all peoples, and which was translated into over 100 languages, making it one of the most translated books in history;

Whereas in 1959 Mohamed Atalla, an Egyptian-American engineer who was an important pioneer and contributor to the early field of modern electronics, invented the metal-oxide-semiconductor field-effect transistor (MOSFET), which is the most frequently manufactured device in history, the basis of the contemporary 4th Industrial Revolution, and hailed by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office as one of the most important inventions in electronics;

Whereas the Lebanese-American woman Helen Thomas covered every United States President from John F. Kennedy to Barack Obama, served as White House correspondent for United Press International, later serving as the White House Bureau Chief and Dean of the White House Press Corps, and was recognized by the World Almanac as one of the 25 Most Influential Women in America;

Whereas the Federal Government has overstepped its constitutional boundaries in regard to surveillance and suspicion of the Arab-American community as far back as

the 1960s, when the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) included Arabs as targets of its Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO);

Whereas, in 1972, the Cabinet Committee to Combat Terrorism directed the State Department, FBI, and Immigration and Nationality Service (INS) to enact “special measures” to monitor both non-citizen residents of Arab origin and Arab Americans who were United States citizens, including unconstitutional interrogation of Arab students’ political views, often leading to deeper FBI investigation, and close scrutinization of visa status, often leading to enforced penalties such as deportation;

Whereas media representations of Arab Americans in the post-9/11 era reinforce longstanding racial stereotypes about Arabs, which contribute to anti-Arab hate crimes and obscure the actual character and complexity of community members;

Whereas *Raza v. City of New York* demonstrates the persistence of anti-Arab bias in Federal, State, and local law enforcement programs as well as the contributions to community safety of Arab-American community organizations like the Arab American Association of New York;

Whereas systemic and structural anti-Arab discrimination have impacted the health outcomes, socioeconomic conditions, and life chances of Arab Americans in ways not captured by the Federal data on racial and ethnic minorities, leading to the persistence of racist disparities;

Whereas socioeconomic and health disparities between Arab Americans and the general population are obscured by Federal data collection and reporting standards, which do not disaggregate between Arab Americans and White

people on the United States Census, nor in the Office of Management and Budget’s Federal Statistical Policy Directives;

Whereas the Arab American Institute estimates that there are roughly 3,700,000 Arab Americans living in the United States;

Whereas the establishment of a Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) category within the United States Census and Statistical Policy Directive Number 15 of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which sets the Federal Government’s standards for data demographic data collection and reporting standards, would allow for the collection and reporting of disaggregated data between White people and “Middle Eastern and North African” people and demonstrate the unique impact of systemic anti-Arab racism on Arab Americans’ socioeconomic conditions, health outcomes, and life chances;

Whereas there is a need for public education, awareness, and policies that are culturally competent when describing, discussing, and addressing the impacts of being Arab American in all aspects of American society;

Whereas, according to Census Bureau data, Arabic is one of the fastest growing languages in the United States;

Whereas President Biden recognized the celebration of Arab American Heritage Month in an April 19th, 2021, letter to Arab America and the Arab America Foundation, making him the first sitting U.S. President to do so;

Whereas the Department of State recognized April as National Arab American Heritage Month in 2021;

Whereas at least 40 States and territories have taken steps to recognize April as Arab American Heritage Month, in-

cluding the governments of Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Hawai‘i, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming;

Whereas numerous cities, towns and counties across America have taken steps to recognize April as Arab American Heritage Month, including Los Angeles, CA; Orange County, CA; San Francisco, CA; San Diego, CA; Gainesville, FL; Orlando, FL; Atlanta, GA; Chicago, IL; Cook County, IL; Baltimore, MD; Detroit, MI; Wayne County, MI; Dearborn, MI; Dearborn Heights, MI; Flint, MI; Yonkers, NY; Westchester County, NY; Raleigh, NC; Cuyahoga County, OH; Cleveland, OH; Toledo, OH; Portland, OR; Philadelphia, PA; Dallas, TX; Alexandria, VA; Richmond, VA; Milwaukee, WI; and Madison, WI; and

Whereas the incredible contributions and heritage of Arab Americans have helped us build a better Nation: Now, therefore, be it

- 1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—
- 2 (1) supports the designation of the month of
- 3 April of each year as Arab American Heritage
- 4 Month;

1 (2) esteems the integral role of Arab Americans
2 in the economy, culture, and identity of the United
3 States; and

4 (3) urges the people of the United States to ob-
5 serve Arab American Heritage Month with appro-
6 priate programs and activities that recognize, ad-
7 dress, and celebrate the unique contributions of
8 Arab Americans to the United States.

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