

where he got his start, where my family came to truly appreciate how much the automobile industry means, not just to families such as ours but to our State, and especially how much the Oldsmobile meant to Michigan—Lansing, in particular.

I am sad, therefore, to see the Oldsmobile go, as we have known it, but I am confident General Motors will continue to make quality, safe automobiles for generations to come. As we bring down the curtain on the Oldsmobile, I rise today to offer my praise to that company, to those who started it, and their families and descendants who still remain in the Lansing area and in Michigan; also, to all those workers who, as my father, worked over the years for that Oldsmobile division of General Motors. I think each and every one of them took to their jobs a great satisfaction, a commitment to hard work, and a tremendous pride in the craftsmanship that went into making the automobile for many generations one of this country's favorite lines of vehicles.

I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I inquire of the Chair, are we still in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair informs the Senator from Michigan we are in a period of morning business until the hour of 2:30.

#### PROUD ARAB AMERICAN HERITAGE

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I will comment briefly on a matter of relevance both personally to me and to my State. Since the election, as a consequence of my defeat, I have heard from a number of people from the Arab American community, both in Michigan and across the United States. As a Lebanese American myself, I have been very proud to be, at least for the last several years, the only Arab American Member of this Chamber.

A number of folks from that community expressed their disappointment in the results of the campaign. I take the floor today to thank so many people who have been in touch, but also to make several points that I hope will be heard by members of the community, to be taken into account as they consider the results of this election, as well as the future.

First, I note that in recent years I believe the Arab American community has become a key part of the American political process. The participation of the community has continued to increase both in my State of Michigan as

well as across the country. Not only are people voting in greater numbers as a percentage of the community, and for many taking the first step of participating in the elections, but their activism in Michigan and other States has grown considerably. I take great pride in seeing that happen.

In addition, we have seen a number of Arab Americans rise to leadership positions at the local level of government all the way up to statewide offices. In the Congress itself we have several Members of Arab heritage on the House side who were elected in the most recent campaigns.

Much of this progress, I think, has translated into progress on issues of importance to the Arab American community in the last 6 years. I have been proud during my term in the Senate to have worked on behalf of a number of important issues relevant to the community. One has been to see the travel ban to Lebanon lifted in 1997, which has opened more opportunities for better relations between the United States and Lebanon, and also for more commercial activity between the two countries.

This Chamber passed a resolution decrying intolerance toward people of Islamic faith in this country, a much needed statement, I think, for the Congress to make so we can be on record consistently as opposing intolerance toward people of any religious faith. We have supported important programs that have affected the Middle East. One that we have worked on in our office with Senator FEINSTEIN and others is the Seeds of Peace Program, which I believe will have a long-term and positive impact on the relationships between countries in the Middle East, including Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Yemen, as well as the Palestinians.

I think the potential for the future is even greater. I think it is very likely in the area of public policy that the people from the Arab American community will rise and play an ever active role and a greater role, as they have done in other fields of endeavor. In America's business community, we have many Arab American leaders today who are heading up important companies from one end of the country to the other. In sports and entertainment and the arts, we likewise have seen Arab Americans excel. In education, the same is true. Indeed, the level of educational attainment by young people of Arab American background continues to be one of the most important components of the Arab American ethnic communities' contribution to the United States.

I am very proud of my heritage. I have talked to many other Members of this Chamber about my background over the years. I am glad to have helped in a small way—to have played a role in moving forward some of the policy objectives I mentioned a few minutes ago. I hope, to some extent, that has helped encourage others in their own communities, States, or even

perhaps at the Federal level to do so, as well.

Recently in Dearborn, MI, home to the largest concentration of Arab Americans in the United States, I was approached by a woman who had a young son in the seventh grade, saying how happy he was to know a Senator shared his Arab American heritage. I hope that in my brief career in the Senate maybe there are others who have similarly sparked an interest in government because they happen to be part of that same community to which I belong.

My message is to praise the community, especially, but also to say to any who have harbored a sense of disappointment with the results of the election, I hope that disappointment will not be long standing. It certainly isn't the case for myself. I encourage people in the community to continue to play an active role in politics. Obviously, our political process inevitably produces success and failure from election to election.

For people new to the process, sometimes they misunderstand and treat a setback as something that should discourage future involvement. I hope that across the Arab American community, and especially for those who first got active in the political process with this election, that they will continue to play an active role, even increase their involvement, and hopefully encourage others to do likewise. That would be invaluable to the community, and certainly from my point of view, it would be the preferable outcome.

My grandparents came a century ago from Lebanon, where they left behind everything to risk their fortunes on America. As is the case with people not just from the Arab American community but so many other immigrant communities, they came here with very little in the way of material possessions, but they came with a great deal of desire and energy and the hope that by working hard and playing by the rules they could make a contribution.

As I have said to the others on this floor in the past, they did not necessarily come here assuming they would have a grandson who would be in the Senate, but they wanted to live in a country where that was possible. Indeed, that is what our country always will be. And I think it always will. I am proud to have had the opportunity to fulfill, probably in the utmost way, the hopes that were brought here by my grandparents when they arrived.

I think, as I look back on my service in the Senate, perhaps more than anything else, will be the source of pride that I take with me as I leave the Chamber today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

#### SENATOR ABRAHAM

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I did want to take a moment, as someone