

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 286

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

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 10, 2023

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

RESOLUTION

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

Whereas every April, the United States shall celebrate Arab American Heritage Month given the rationale herein provided;

Whereas today the Arab American Institute estimates that there are roughly 3,700,000 Arab Americans living in the United States, from a variety of faith backgrounds including both Christians and Muslims originating from any of the 22 Arabic speaking countries, have throughout their history in the United States generously shared their culture, music, and food with their fellow citizens and

contributed disproportionately to their numbers to the economy and society of the United States, having brought with them to the United States their resilient family values, strong work ethic, dedication to education, and diversity that have added strength to our democracy;

Whereas Arab American entrepreneurs from the first door-to-door peddlers to owners of restaurants, bakeries, and stores, to large manufacturers of men's and women's clothes (Farah and Haggar for example) have been hard-working, self-sufficient contributors to the United States economy;

Whereas the first recorded Arab in the United States was the Moroccan Mostafa (Estanaico) Zemmouri in 1527, and that Arab Americans, including the early Syrians and Lebanese, began arriving in significant numbers to these shores in the 1870s, including Antonio Bishallany, who arrived in Boston in 1854, and another early wave arrival, Dr. Joseph Arbeeley who became United States citizens and including waves of other Arab Americans that followed;

Whereas Arab Americans have served in protection of the United States in every major confrontation and in all branches of the military, and from World War I and World War II to the present day as exemplified by ace jet pilot, Colonel James Jabara who was highly decorated and served in World War II and the Korean War, and all other Arab American persons in uniform today, as well as first responders throughout the United States, and as public servants from both political parties, past and present, that have served in the United States Government, the Congress, the Senate, and as ambassadors and cabinet members;

Whereas Arab Americans have excelled in science, engineering, medicine, education, scholarship, and architecture including an organic chemist, Elias James Corey (Nobel Prize 1990), chemist investigating transition reactions, Ahmed Zewail (Nobel Prize 1999), chemical physicist, Mostafa El-Sayed, a leading nanoscience researcher, a member of the National Academy of Sciences and a National Medal of Science laureate who sat on the President's National Medal of Science Committee in 2014, Dr. Farouk El-Baz a pioneer in space photography, Dr. Michael DeBakey, cardiovascular surgeon and inventor of ventricular assist devices and aorta repair procedures;

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, and hailed by the United States Patent and Trademark Office as one of the most important inventions in electronics;

Whereas Arab Americans have excelled in sports like quarterback and Heisman Trophy winner Doug Flutie and in entertainment including actors, singers, comedians, and musicians such as actor, singer, and founder of St. Jude's Children's Hospital, Danny Thomas, Emmy-winner Tony Shalhoub, comedian, and commentator Dean Obeidallah, gifted musician Dr. Ali Jihad Racy, award-winning violinist Simon Shaheen, and so many others;

Whereas, according to Census Bureau data, Arabic is one of the fastest growing languages in the United States, and that Arab American journalists, newspaper editors, and writers have informed their communities and others in

Arabic and English, adding to the body of United States literature and reporting beginning with Nabeeb and Ibrahim Arbeely, editors of the first Arab American newspaper, Kawkab Amirka, the distinguished writer of the first Arab American novel, The Book of Khalid, Ameen Rihani, the renowned poet, writer and artist, author of The Prophet, among his other numerous writings, and founder of the Pen Bond writers, the beloved writer Kahlil Gibran, the late New York Times reporter Anthony Shadid, White House Press Corps Correspondent Helen Thomas (recognized by the World Almanac as one of the 25 Most Influential Women in America), poet and writer Naomi Shihab Nye, novelist Diana Abu-Jaber, and hundreds more;

Whereas Arab American women have provided excellent role models such as Emmy-winning actor, Marlo Thomas, actress Kathy Najimy, Secretary of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala, artist and poet, Etel Adnan, NPR host Diane Reim, and the doctor who raised awareness that children were being poisoned by lead in Flint, Michigan, Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha, plus all the women previously mentioned and thousands of other accomplished women not herein listed;

Whereas Arab American Heritage Month is necessary to address the misconceptions, misinformation, Arabophobia, anti-Arabism, and discrimination against Arab Americans by celebrating their accomplishments and providing factual information about Arab American culture and persons and the 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 the United States society;

Whereas, in 2017, Arab America established National Arab American Heritage Month (NAAHM), and President Biden recognized the celebration of National Arab American Heritage Month in an April 19, 2021, letter to the Arab America Foundation, making him the first sitting United States President to do so; and the Department of State recognized April as National Arab American Heritage Month in 2021;

Whereas at least 46 States and territories have taken steps to recognize April as National Arab American Heritage Month, including the Governments of Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming;

Whereas numerous cities, towns, and counties across the United States have taken steps to recognize April as National Arab American Heritage Month, including but not limited to: 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; Dallas, TX; 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;

Whereas 4 States have passed permanent legislation designating the month of April as NAAHM including Illinois, Oregon, Virginia, the Indiana Senate, and several States are considering permanent legislation including, Ohio, New Jersey, Michigan, and Rhode Island;

Whereas, on March 31, 2023, President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., proclaimed April 2023 as Arab American Heritage Month, becoming the first President to do so, the proclamation read in part, “Ours is a Nation shaped by the immigrant’s heart, and generations of brave and hopeful people from across all countries, including from the Arab world, have woven their unique heritages, customs, and talents into the tapestry of America.”, the President continued, “The United States is the only Nation in the world founded on an idea—the idea that we are all created equal and deserve to be treated equally throughout our lives. As a Nation, we have never fully lived up to that promise, but we have never walked away from it either. This Arab American Heritage Month, let us all strive to honor our fundamental values and advance equity and opportunity for all people, affirming once again that diversity is our country’s greatest strength.”; and

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

- 1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—
- 2 (1) supports the designation of National Arab
- 3 American Heritage 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
5 serve National Arab American Heritage Month with
6 appropriate programs and activities that recognize
7 and celebrate the unique contributions of Arab
8 Americans.

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