

# ELECTIONS 2002

Arab Americans On The Move



A report by the Arab American Institute



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## Arab Americans on the Move



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# 2002: Arab Americans Launch Largest Mid-Term “Get Out the Vote” Effort

*“Arab Americans are demonstrating they are not only a reliable voter group, but they will work for candidates who are open to our communities' concerns.”*

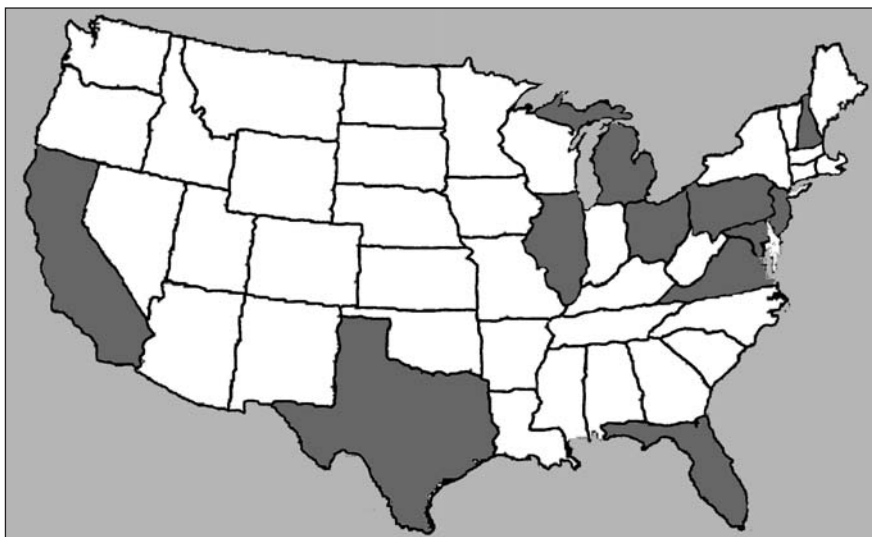
*-AAI Managing Director Jean AbiNader*

**W**hile the 2002 elections were talked about as the one of the most important mid-term elections in U.S. history, this election marked a critical landmark for Arab American political activism as well.

Over the last 20 years, Arab Americans have worked to make a place for themselves in national politics. In 1988, Arab Americans kicked open the doors of the political process when they introduced a policy platform supporting Palestinian rights at the Democratic National Convention. By the 2000 presidential election, it was clear Arab Americans had won the respect of both major political parties when both the Bush and Gore campaigns courted their votes.

Arab Americans built on this success during the 2002 midterm election by launching their largest mid-term GOTV effort. The result is an impressive record of political participation and activism:

11	States had targeted Arab American GOTV efforts (Michigan, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, Illinois, California, New Jersey, Florida, Ohio, Texas)
250,000	Incidents of direct Arab American GOTV contact
12,000	GOTV mailings to Arab Americans
50,000	Arab American households received automated GOTV calls
12,300	Arab American households received personal GOTV calls
7	States held AAI-sponsored Candidates' Nights
4	States held AAI-sponsored Civic Education Workshops
100	Candidates participated in Arab American events
450	Arab American volunteers worked as precinct captains, help at polling places or on a state/local campaign



AAI's get-out-the-vote efforts focused on eleven states -- Michigan, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, Illinois, California, New Jersey, Florida, Ohio, and Texas -- with key races and significant Arab American populations. Above, AAI's bilingual "Yalla Vote" logo.

## *GOTV Aims to Boost Already High Arab American Turnout*

AAI Press Release, October 31, 2002

**F**ive days before national elections, Arab Americans are making the final push to ensure a high voter turnout among community members. Because many of the key races that could determine control of the House and Senate and critical gubernatorial races are in states with significant Arab American populations, community members are working hard to ensure that Arab Americans make their voices heard on Tuesday.

Significant Arab American get out the vote (GOTV) efforts are underway in Michigan, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, Illinois, California, New Jersey, Florida and Texas. Activities range from posting signs, flyers and public service announcements featuring the "Yalla Vote" bilingual logo ("Yalla" means 'come on' in Arabic) to phone banking. In areas where local communities have endorsed specific candidates, Arab Americans are volunteering for door-to-door canvassing and phone banking as well as signing up to work the polls on Election Day.

If the low voter turnout during the midterm primary (18.2%--the second lowest in history) is any indication of Election Day turnout, Arab

Americans are positioned to have a significant impact in key races. The national Arab American registered voter database shows that Arab American voters are well represented in 55 congressional districts across the United States, making up between 1.5% and 4.5% of the total voting population. For many years, Arab Americans have demonstrated a high degree of political activity. Americans of Arab descent vote in greater percentages (62% in 1996) and according to a 2000 Zogby International poll, 88.7% of Arab Americans are registered to vote. Only African Americans and Jewish Americans have a higher percentage of voter registration.

"Once again Arab Americans are demonstrating that they are not only a reliable voter group, but they will work for candidates who are open to our communities' concerns. Despite the efforts by a few candidates who engaged in 'Arab-baiting', our community remains true to American democracy and will continue to fight for our place at the table of American politics. On Election Day, Arab Americans will make themselves heard at the voting booth," said Arab American Institute Managing Director Jean AbiNader. ♦

# Arab American Voters

“Because Arab Americans are a reliable voter group who go to the polls in larger percentages than other groups, they could deliver the difference for candidates who listen to their concerns.”

-AAI President Dr. James J. Zogby

- ♦ For many years, Arab Americans have demonstrated a high degree of political activity, only one component of which is financial support. According to a 2000 Zogby International poll, **88.5% of Arab Americans are registered to vote**. Only African Americans and Jewish Americans have a higher percentage of voter registration.
- ♦ In the 2000 election season **14.5% of Arab American voters contributed to a presidential campaign and 82% watched a presidential debate**. Of six ethnic groups polled (African American, Asian American, Hispanic, American Jews, Italian Americans and Arab Americans), Arab Americans were among the highest on these issues.
- ♦ The national Arab American registered voter database shows that Arab American voters are **well represented in 55 congressional districts** across the United States, making up between 1.5% and 4.5% of the total voting population.
- ♦ **Arab American populations number in the hundreds of thousands\*** in many states with key races in the 2002 elections:

California	650,000
New York	410,000
Michigan	400,000
Florida	270,000
New Jersey	250,000
Texas	190,000
Illinois	180,000
Ohio	160,000
Massachusetts	160,000
Pennsylvania	150,000
Virginia	140,000
Maryland	60,000
New Hampshire	60,000

- ♦ Americans of Arab descent **vote in greater percentages** (62% in 1996) and are **more politically active than average Americans**.
- ♦ According to an October 2002 Zogby International poll, over three-fourths of all Arab American voters say **the Middle East is a “very” or “somewhat” important issue** in determining their vote.

*\* Estimates based on 2000 US Census data, Arab American Institute (AAIF) research, and AAIF-commissioned surveys.*

# 2002 Election Results: Arab American Candidates



U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall II  
West Virginia



U.S. Rep. Chris John  
Louisiana



Maine Governor-Elect John  
Baldacci

## California

<b>Darrell Issa</b> (R-49), U.S. House (for re-election)	WON	(78%)
<b>Maad Abu Ghazalah</b> (L-12), U.S. House	LOST	(7.2%)
<b>Al Dib</b> (Dist. 5), San Fernando Valley City Council	LOST	(12.88%)
<b>Ron Dudum</b> , San Francisco Board of Supervisors	LOST*	(44%)
<b>David Kawas</b> (R-19), State Representative	LOST	(25.8%)
<b>Paul Hannosh</b> , Lieutenant Governor	LOST	(1.1%)

\*Dec. 10 runoff

## Connecticut

<b>Hon. Fred Anthony</b> (R), Judge of the Probate of Shelton (for re-election)	WON	(58%)
<b>David Cappiello</b> (R-24), State Senator (for re-election)	WON	(unopposed)
<b>Hon. Paul Ganim</b> , Judge of the Probate of Bridgeport (for re-election)	WON	(61%)
<b>William Hamzy</b> (R-78), State Rep. (for re-election)	WON	(unopposed)
<b>Selim Noujaim</b> (R-74), State Rep. (for re-election)	WON	(64%)
<b>Hon. Dianne Yamin</b> , Judge of the Probate of Danbury (for re-election)	WON	(unopposed)

## Illinois

<b>Ray LaHood</b> (R-18), U.S. House (for re-election)	WON	(unopposed)
<b>George Shadid</b> (D-46), State Senator (for re-election)	WON	(unopposed)

## Indiana

<b>David Sabbagh</b> (R-60), State Representative	LOST	(37%)
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## Kentucky

<b>Teresa Isaac</b> , Mayor of Lexington	WON	(51.2%)
<b>Dennis George</b> , Lebanon City Council	WON	(unopposed)

## Louisiana

<b>Chris John</b> (D-7), U.S. House (for re-election)	WON	(87%)
<b>Suzanne Haik Terrell</b> (R), U.S. Senate	LOST*	(48%)

\*Dec. 7 runoff

## Massachusetts

<b>Stephen Abraham</b> , Register of the Probate, Worcester County Probate and Family Division	WON	(54.7%)
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## Maine

U.S. Rep. **John Baldacci** (D-2) for Governor WON (48%)

## Michigan

State Rep. **Nancy Cassis** (R-15), State Senate WON (60.5%)  
**Ismael Ahmed** (D), University of Michigan LOST (20.4%)  
Board of Regents

## New Hampshire

**Benjamin C. Baroody** (D-54), State Rep. (for re-election) WON (18%)  
U.S. Rep. **John Sununu** (R), U.S. Senate WON (51%)  
Gov. **Jeanne Shaheen** (D), U.S. Senate LOST (47%)

## New Jersey

**Jack Mazloom** (R), Mercer County Freeholder LOST (20.7%)

## New York

**Thomas W. Libous** (R/C-52), State Senate (for re-election) WON (unopposed)  
**Tony Sayegh** (R-88), State Assembly LOST (43%)

## North Carolina

**Chris Kouri** (D-8), U.S. House LOST (45%)

## Pennsylvania

**Camille "Bud" George**, State Representative WON (68%)

## Rhode Island

**John Barr** (D-46), State Rep. (for re-election) LOST (40%)  
**Hanna Gallo** (D-27), State Senate (for re-election) WON (67%)  
**Daniel Issa** (D-16), State Senate (for re-election) WON (80%)

## South Carolina

**Peter J. Ashy** (D-4), U.S. House LOST (30%)

## South Dakota

**Gene Abdallah** (R-10), State Senate (for re-election) WON (unopposed)

## Tennessee

**James "Jim" Naifeh** (D-81), State Rep. (for re-election) WON (52.8%)

## West Virginia

**Nick J. Rahall II** (D-3), U.S. House (for re-election) WON (70%)

## Wyoming

**Jim Darwish** (R), Teton County Commissioner WON (23.8%)



Lexington, KY Mayor-Elect  
Teresa Isaac



New Hampshire Senator-Elect  
John Sununu



U.S. Rep. Darrell Issa  
California

# 2002

Zogby International surveyed 500 Arab American voters during the last week of October 2002. The poll, commissioned by the Arab American Institute, has a margin of error of +/- 4.5%.

## 2002 Arab Americans' Party Affiliation

	Total	Born in US	Born overseas	Male	Female
Democrat	39%	35%	51%	38%	40%
Republican	31%	35%	19%	30%	32%
Neither	14%	-	-	-	-
Not sure	16%	-	-	-	-

## How important is the Middle East in determining your vote?

	Total	Born in US	Born overseas
Very	48%	44%	59%
Somewhat	29.5%	32%	20.5%
Not important	20%	2.5%	15.5%
Not sure	2.5%	2%	4%

## How do you view the Bush Administration's policy on the Middle East?

Favorably	28%
Unfavorably	67%

## Are you reassured by President Bush's conduct toward Arab Americans?

	Oct. 2001	May 2002	Oct. 2002
Reassured	90%	54%	46%
Not reassured	6%	35%	38%
Not sure	4%	11%	-

# 2000

Arab American Vote\*

	Party Affiliation	Congressional Vote	Presidential Vote
Democrat	40%	43.5%	38% (Gore)
Republican	38%	44%	45.5% (Bush)
Independent	22%	6.5%	13.5% (Nader)

# 1996

Arab American Vote\*

	Party Affiliation	Congressional Vote	Presidential Vote
Democrat	38%	43%	51.5%
Republican	35.5%	44%	31.5%
Independent	23%	6%	8.5%

\*Source: Zogby International

# Poll: Mideast Policy Will Shape Arab American Vote

AAI Press Release, November 4, 2002

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Concern with the Bush Administration's handling of U.S. Middle East policy is having an impact on the attitudes of Arab American voters. A recent poll conducted by Zogby International finds that in the 2002 congressional election, 40 percent of Arab Americans support the Democratic Party, while only 30 percent support the Republican Party.

This 10% Democratic edge represents a significant decline in support for the Republicans since 2000 when Arab American voters divided their vote almost evenly between the two parties. While giving Bush a 45.5% to 38% edge over Al Gore in the 2000 Presidential election (Ralph Nader received 13.5%), when asked to express their 2000 congressional preference Arab Americans gave the Democrats 43.5% to the Republican 44. In 1996, the Democratic and Republican numbers in the congressional election were 43% supporting Democratic candidates with 44% supporting Republican candidates.

The reason for the decline in support for the Republican Party appears to be due to frustration with the policy of the Bush Administration. When asked how important the Middle East was to their vote in this election 49% of Arab Americans said "very important" and 29% said "somewhat important". In other words, between one-half to three-fourths of all Arab American voters say the Middle East is an "important issue" in determining their vote. When asked how they viewed the Bush Administration's policy on the Middle East 28% responded "favorably" while 67% responded "unfavorably".

The data also reveals concern regarding the Bush Administration's handling of civil rights issues. When asked if they were satisfied with President Bush's conduct toward Arab Americans 46% answered "yes" and 38% "no". That continues the downward slide since the question was first asked after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In October 2001, 90% of Arab Americans said they were reassured by the president's response. In May 2002, only 54% felt reassured while 35% were not.

Zogby International surveyed 500 Arab American voters during the last week of October. The poll, which was commissioned by the Arab American Institute, has a margin of error of +/-4.5%.

Arab Americans were also asked to identify which party is best at handling a variety of issues. When it came to domestic issues, Arab Americans leaned toward the Democratic Party, but on the issue of terrorism, they were slightly more supportive of the Republican Party.

"This poll indicates that Arab American concerns with Bush Administration policy regarding the Middle East and civil liberties will affect how Arab Americans vote for Congress tomorrow. In an election where the House and Senate are almost evenly divided and with so much riding on a few close races, Arab Americans are poised to have an impact. Because Arab Americans are a reliable voter group who go to the polls in larger percentages than other groups, they could deliver the difference for candidates that listen to their concerns," said AAI President Dr. James J. Zogby. ♦

Three-fourths of Arab American voters say the Middle East is an "important issue" in determining their vote.

"Which party handles the following issues the best?"

	Dem.	Rep.
Economy	45%	33%
Terrorism	28%	34%
Health Care	54%	24%
Education	49%	28%
Soc. Security	51%	23%

# Third Election Cycle Where Arab American PAC Hits Goal

AAI Press Release, October 24, 2002

WASHINGTON, D.C. – With less than two weeks left before Election Day, the nation’s largest Arab American PAC, the Arab American Leadership Council PAC (ALCPAC), has reached its goal of contributing \$100,000 or more for the third consecutive election cycle. The ALCPAC is a non-affiliated federal PAC that raises money to support Arab Americans and other qualified candidates.

In all, fifty-three contributions were made to federal campaigns and twenty-one to non-federal campaigns during the 2000-2002 election cycle. Among contributions to federal campaigns, thirty-three incumbent campaigns received support from the ALCPAC. Of the non-federal contributions made, all but three were for candidates who were challenging incumbents or who were seeking an open seat. The majority of those non-federal candidates receiving support were Arab Americans, and many were first-time office seekers.

Senators receiving contributions include Chuck Hagel (NE) and Paul Wellstone (MN) along with challengers John E. Sununu (NH) and Jeanne Shaheen (NH). In addition to incumbent Arab Americans Nick Rahall (WV), Ray LaHood (IL), Chris John (LA) and Darrel Issa (CA), challenger Chris Kouri (NC) also received an ALCPAC contribution. Other Members of the House receiving ALCPAC support include John Dingell (MI); Henry Hyde (IL); Jesse Jackson, Jr. (IL); Joe Knollenberg (MI); James Moran (VA); and Dana Rohrabacher (CA).

“Although the amounts may seem modest to some, they are significant because all of the fundraising occurred within the Arab American community. Across the nation, Arab Americans contributed in an effort to support not only Arab American candidates, but candidates who support our community and listen to our concerns. Reaching our goal signifies that Arab Americans are committed to the political process and will not be deterred from participating in it,” said ALCPAC Assistant Treasurer Jean AbiNader.

For many years, Arab Americans have demonstrated a high degree of political activity, only one component of which is financial support. According to a 2000 Zogby International poll, 88.7% of Arab Americans are registered to vote. Only African Americans and Jewish Americans have a higher percentage of voter registration. Once more, 16% of Arab American voters contributed to a presidential campaign and nearly 82% watched a presidential debate. Of six ethnic groups polled (African American, Asian American, Hispanic, American Jews, Italian Americans and Arab Americans), Arab Americans ranked first in both these issues. ♦

83%  
of candidates  
supported by  
ALCPAC  
won in 2002

# In the Press

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Excerpts from articles on key Arab American races and Arab American campaign efforts.

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## Arab Role Increasing in US Politics

By Jim Geraghty  
The Boston Globe, Nov. 3, 2002

WASHINGTON - The number of Arab-Americans holding local, state, and federal office may increase slightly this year, despite a political atmosphere colored by the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the looming possibility of war with Iraq, according to Arab-American groups. ...

[AAI Managing Director Jean]AbiNader said that a few races this year have seen examples of "Arab-baiting" - attempts by candidates to make an issue out of an opponent's ethnicity or connections to the Arab-American community.

In a New York State Assembly race, Democratic Assemblywoman Amy Paulin was caught on tape commenting about the amount of money her GOP challenger, Tony Sayegh, had received from Arab-Americans. Reading a list of Sayegh's donors, she said, "Bahari, Jahaba, I can't even say these names."

## Extraordinary Election Year for Arab Americans

By Ghada Elnajjar  
Washington File, US State Department, November 7, 2002

Arab American leaders are satisfied with the overall outcome of the recent U.S. mid-term elections, citing the key role their community played in the results. Leaders who have been involved in electoral politics say that this has been an extraordinary off-year election for the Arab American community.

The community's efforts to mobilize, fundraise, recruit volunteers, and get out the vote, were quite exceptional, all of which, they believe, contributed to successful results, said James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute (AAI), at a press briefing on November 6.

"Overall the response was great and we are ready for 2004 because we think that there are huge responsibilities and huge opportunities given how energized we find the community wanting to participate in this process," he said. ...

A race that Zogby pointed to with interest is that of Teresa Isaac who was vice mayor of Lexington, Kentucky. She left office to run for Congress in the last election, but lost. Isaac came back this year and ran for mayor. Isaac was baited for receiving support from the ALCPAC and from other Arab American donors. Backed by many in her community, Isaac fought back, and won the election with about 51 percent of the vote. "She is now the Mayor of Lexington, Kentucky. We are very proud of her," said Zogby.

## *Isaac Supporters Deny Claims of Anti-Semitism*

By Michelle Ku  
Lexington Herald-Leader  
November 4, 2002

Members of the Central Kentucky Jewish community yesterday denounced last minute allegations that mayoral candidate Teresa Isaac is anti-Semitic and pro-Palestinian.

On Friday night, a flier alleging Isaac has anti-Semitic tendencies was placed on the windshields of cars at Temple Adath Israel and Ohavay Zion Synagogue during Sabbath services.

"What we most resent is the fact that these people, whoever they are, would show no respect on the Sabbath and would spread these scurrilous fliers," said Steve Kesten, a member of Temple Adath Israel and board member of the Central Kentucky Jewish Federation. Kesten was one of about 35 Isaac supporters who spoke with the media yesterday about the allegations. ...

The fliers say that "Teresa Isaac

has made repeated trips to the Middle East to 'monitor' Palestinian elections -- elections that Yasser Arafat always 'wins' overwhelmingly' and that "Teresa Isaac has been a featured speaker at Pro-Palestinian rallies." ...

In 1996, Isaac, who is of Lebanese descent, was one of six Arab-American politicians selected by the Arab American Institute - a Washington, D.C., organization that promotes Arab-American participation in government - to join hundreds of international observers witnessing the first Palestinian election.

"She has only been there that one time, and we consider that kind of an honor," said Isaac campaign adviser Susan Hammond. "She was there in the same room as Jimmy Carter where people voted."

Also, Isaac spoke at a Palestinian rally in the past year, but she spoke about the need for peace in the Middle East, Hammond said. "For her to have to take a hit for that is ridiculous."

## "Democratic Rep. Jim Moran Asks Arab Americans to Run for Office; Republican Rep. Tom Davis Stresses that Political Participation is the Answer"

Al-Ahram, October 30, 2002

Democratic Representative Jim Davis directed his appreciation to those Arab American political activists, who contributed their expertise and knowledge of the Middle East and its political issues and raised the level of his concern with working towards a more balanced U.S. foreign policy towards the region. He also said that he will continue traveling to the region to exchange perspectives with Arab leaders, such as his

recent trips, where he visited with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Syrian President Bashar El Assad, Lebanese President Emeal LaHood, and Jordanian King Abdallah...

Answering Al-Ahram's question about the impact of the terrorist's attacks against the U.S. on Arab American political involvement, Representative Jim Moran said that what Arab and Muslim Americans had to face, which included harassment, being stopped at airports, racial profil-

ing, and hate crimes, lead to some Arab Americans to cease their political involvement. On the other hand, others realized the important reality that the extent of the community's power depends on the extent of its involvement in the American political system. Therefore, it is imperative that they actively participate on the domestic and national political fronts and in choosing those who get appointed to public offices, judicial committees, Congress, and must also vote in large numbers.

### Paulin, Sayegh in Rough Contest for Assembly

By Linda Leavitt  
Scarsdale Inquirer, Oct. 10, 2002

Republican Tony Sayegh of Bronxville is giving incumbent Democrat Amy Paulin of Scarsdale a run for her money in this year's contest for the 88th District Assembly seat. ...

Saying he was proud of being a first-generation American, the son of Christian Lebanese immigrants, Sayegh closed by accusing Paulin of making "inappropriate insinuations" about his supporters in a tape of a phone conversation made by a reporter.... She [Paulin] sounded shocked at the names on the [contributor] list and at first declined to say why; when pressed by the reporter, she told him, "off the record," that most of the names were Arab and they had given large amounts of money. She said they might all be Sayegh's family members. ...

Paulin added that Sayegh's name appeared as "a candidate to watch for" on the Web site of the Arab-American Institute, a site that contained "a lot of anti-Semitism" and had been linked to Sayegh's website.

### *Letter to the Editor*

Scarsdale Inquirer, Nov. 1, 2002

Candidates' attacking each other's positions on issues has become a staple in our democracy. On the other hand, a candidate attempting to use the ethnicity of their opponent as part of their attack effort is both unacceptable and deplorable.

Assemblywoman Amy Paulin, has, it appears, done this and more.... Imagine for a moment if someone were to suggest that it should be an issue that a candidate and his or her supporters were Jewish, Italian or African American. It is just as ugly to attempt to make an issue of Arab ethnicity.

But Ms. Paulin further compounds this outrage by making an issue of the fact that Mr. Sayegh's candidacy is noted on the website of my organization, the Arab American Institute, which she falsely claims contains "a lot of anti-Semitism". Her tactic in this regard is appalling and unwarranted of an elected official. I take this charge very personally. It is both hurtful and wrong. To lightly throw around the charge of anti-Semitism is dangerous and ugly character assassination. Ms. Paulin owes Mr. Sayegh and my Institute an apology.

Dr. James J. Zogby  
President, Arab American Institute

# Good News, Bad News, No News At All

“Washington Watch”  
by James Zogby  
November 11, 2002

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“Washington Watch” is a weekly column published in over a dozen newspapers worldwide. For current columns and archives, visit our website at [www.aaiusa.org](http://www.aaiusa.org).

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For Arab Americans the 2002 elections produced much good news, some bad news and, in other instances, no news at all. For starters, 70 percent of Arab Americans running for office this November won their elections. The most important victor was Senator-elect John Sununu of New Hampshire. What makes his win especially satisfying was the fact that he had been targeted for defeat by pro-Israel groups.

During the Republican primary earlier this year, Sununu’s Arab ancestry was repeatedly attacked by his opponent, Senator Bob Smith. Smith challenged what he called Sununu’s pro-Palestinian voting record and even brought former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to campaign for him. Sununu easily beat Smith in the primary elections.

In the general election Sununu faced Democratic Governor Jeanne Shaheen. Despite being married to a prominent New Hampshire Arab American, Shaheen attempted to paint Sununu as not pro-Israel enough to serve in the Senate. She challenged Sununu’s voting record and his opposition to Israel’s claim to Jerusalem as its undivided capital. In response, Sununu stood his ground, maintaining that the status of the city had to be determined in negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

Arab Americans rallied to Sununu’s campaign. They donated to his effort, volunteered on his behalf, and therefore celebrated his victory as an important one for the community.

Next door in the state of Maine, another Arab American congressman, Democrat John Baldacci, also ran for a new post, that of governor. He won as well.

The remaining four Arab American incumbent congressmen also won reelection: Democrat Nick Rahall of West Virginia; Republican Ray LaHood of Illinois; Democrat Chris John of Louisiana, and Republican Darrell Issa of California.

Another great win celebrated by Arab Americans is Theresa Isaac’s victory as Mayor of Lexington, KY. Ms. Isaac, an Arab American Democrat, and a long-time supporter of the Arab American Institute, was subjected to a last minute anti-Arab attack by her opponents. A group calling itself “Bluegrass Friends of Israel” circulated fliers in the days before the election, criticizing Isaac’s Arab American ancestry.

In response, prominent Jewish Americans from Lexington denounced the effort and Arab Americans came to her defense as well. Isaac won and became the Chief Executive of the U.S.’s largest city to be headed by an Arab American. Overall Arab Americans fared exceptionally well in other races across the U.S. Most Arab Americans incumbents running for reelection won, as did a number of Arab Americans running for the first time.

Arab American participation was also up. The community organized get-out-the-vote mobilization efforts in 11 states. In all, these efforts directly contacted over 250,000 Arab American voters in the days before the election. In eight communities, Arab

Americans held candidates' nights that brought out over 100 candidates seeking community support.

The Arab American Leadership Council Political Action Committee (ALCPAC) raised and gave over \$150,000 to over 70 congressional candidates. Eighty-three percent of these candidates endorsed by the PAC won their elections, including a number of incumbents and challengers who actively sought Arab American community support. The most important of the victories included the reelection of Michigan Democrat John Dingell and the first-time wins of Ohio Democrat Tim Ryan and Michigan Republican Candice Miller.

Not all the news was good, however. Arab Americans were deeply disappointed by Congressman David Bonior's losing effort in Michigan's Democratic primary race for governor. The primary losses of congressional incumbents Earl Hilliard and Cynthia McKinney were also troubling.

In two cases this November, Arab Americans mobilized to support challengers who also lost. Texas Democrat Tim Riley failed in his attempt to unseat House Majority Whip Tom DeLay, and Pennsylvania Democrat Ed O'Brien lost in his bid to replace Congressman Pat Toomey. Despite being on the losing side in the races, Arab Americans in both states were well organized and won respect for their efforts.

In the days that followed the elections, both US and Arab journalists speculated whether President Bush would be emboldened by the outcome to hasten his plans to go to war against Iraq. "Did the President now have a freer hand?" was the question I was repeatedly asked. Here is where the 2002 elections produced no news.

While the Bush Administration will now have a bit of an easier time setting a domestic agenda, the election will not substantially alter their ability to conduct foreign policy, for two reasons. On the one hand, Democrats have not been an obstacle to the President's foreign policy since the party took control of the Senate over one year ago.

If anything, Democrats were accommodating. They largely gave the President what he wanted in an Iraq resolution, and they have not challenged the Administration's pro-Likud tilt with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Democratic Senator Joseph Biden's chairmanship of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was a sober and sane tenure, in comparison to that of former Republican Chair Jesse Helms. But Helms is retired and the new Republican chair of that influential committee will be a moderate and thoughtful leader, Indiana Senator Richard Lugar.

In any case, the restraints on the Administration's Middle East policy did not come from the U.S. Senate; they came from factors outside of the electoral arena. Domestically, the uniformed military and the career foreign service officers at the Department of State have urged caution and more balance in U.S. Middle East policy. Internationally, the opposition of many of the U.S.'s European and Arab allies have also served as restraining forces.

In this post-November 2002 context, the Administration, while it will no doubt be more aggressive in pursuing tax cuts and a new Homeland Security Department, will still have to wend its way through turbulent and unreceptive international waters. In this regard, the post-November situation is no different than what came before.

The results therefore, of the 2002 elections for Arab Americans: mostly good news, some bad news, and in other cases no change at all. ♦

“Did the President now have a freer hand [in Iraq]?” was the question I was repeatedly asked. Here is where the 2002 elections produced no news.”



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