



**ELECTION  
2000  
REPORT**

**November 9, 2000**

© Arab American Institute





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## 2000 Results Summary

AAI's Campaign 2000 effort was a resounding success. Arab Americans played a significant role in this year's elections and the community's issues of concern were brought into the national policy debate. For the first time, the Arab American vote received unprecedented attention in the press and from candidates in critical battleground states.

Fifteen years of massive voter registration and political mobilization efforts have translated into respect for the community's growing clout.

### Candidates

- ◆ Eighty-percent of Arab American Candidates won victory in Federal, State and Local races.
- ◆ Ninety-percent of Senate and Congressional candidates endorsed by the Arab American Leadership PAC won election.

### Presidential Candidates

Unprecedented attention was given to Arab American voters by the Bush and Gore campaigns.

- ◆ Each had three meetings with Arab Americans during the campaign.
- ◆ Both had high-level campaign staff and advisors.
- ◆ Both endorsed Arab-American issues on discrimination, secret evidence and profiling.
- ◆ A record number of Arab American delegates were elected to national conventions.

### Get Out the Vote!

- ◆ "Yalla Vote" succeeded in mobilizing and educating Arab Americans in nine key states through voter registration, town meetings and educational mailings.
- ◆ AAI-lead efforts resulted in over 400,000 Arab American voters being contacted by mail or phone to get out the vote on November 7.
- ◆ AAI voter guides reached an additional 100,000 Arab American voters.

Visit "Campaign 2000" on AAI's website for more information!

# AAI 2000 POST-ELECTION REPORT

## Campaign 2000 National Leadership Conference (November 1999)

◆ AAI formally launched “Campaign 2000” at its national leadership conference in November 1999. Over seven hundred Arab Americans attended the three-day conference in Dearborn, Michigan and heard from presidential candidates **John McCain** and **Al Gore**. The chairs of both the Democratic and Republican parties and a dozen members of Congress also addressed the Arab American event. The conference came on the heels of AAI’s nationwide voter registration effort entitled, “Yalla Vote” and received widespread press coverage, including headlines of Arab Americans being “courted” by presidential hopefuls.

## Presidential Primary Season (Spring 2000)

◆ During the presidential primaries, AAI organized town meetings and candidate forums in six areas of major Arab American concentrations across the nation. At these sessions, AAI field staff conducted training sessions for Arab Americans interested in becoming delegates to the national conventions.

◆ Arab Americans also heard from candidates and prominent surrogates from the national campaigns. **Bill Bradley** spoke at an AAI event in Iowa on the eve of that state’s crucial caucuses. Before the event, **Al Gore** also met with Iowa’s Arab American leadership. Senator **Chuck Hagel** (R-NE) represented John McCain in Dearborn just days before his stunning primary upset in Michigan. Secretary of Transportation **Rodney Slater** represented the Gore campaign. Not to be outdone, an event in San Francisco featured the chair of the California Democratic Party and U.S. Senate candidate **Tom Campbell** courted the community at an event held in Los Angeles.

◆ AAI also engaged in its own outreach efforts with a number of campaigns. AAI prepared briefing papers on key issues to the community, which were then disseminated to candidates and their campaign aides. AAI sent questionnaires covering these issues to the four major presidential candidates as well as targeted congressional campaigns. All four responded, allowing AAI to post their responses on its website.

## National Conventions (Summer 2000)

◆ As Campaign 2000 moved into the summer, AAI focused its efforts on the national conventions. AAI hosted separate tribute events at the Democratic and Republican national conventions and counted nearly sixty Arab American delegates combined. The conventions also served to formalize Arab American national support committees for the two major presidential tickets.

Visit “Campaign 2000” on AAI’s website for more information!

## Meetings with Candidates and Advisors (Fall 2000)

◆ **George W. Bush** and **Al Gore** each met with the community on three separate occasions to discuss issues of concern. Both major candidates also actively solicited Arab American endorsements. Eight Arab Americans in total served on the staff of the presidential campaigns, some in senior level advisory positions. In addition, **Tipper Gore**, **Joe Lieberman** and Bush's foreign policy advisor **Condoleezza Rice** also traveled to Michigan to meet and address the Arab American community.

◆ Finally, and perhaps most importantly, both candidates addressed Arab American issues in public forums. Bush sent shockwaves through the community when he mentioned racial profiling and secret evidence during the second televised debate. A few days later, while speaking at a rally in Detroit, Gore came out in support of secret evidence repeal legislation.

## Getting out the Arab-American Vote (Fall 2000)

◆ On the state level, AAI facilitated bipartisan Arab American leadership councils in Ohio and Michigan, which later endorsed a number of candidates. The national Arab American Leadership Council (ALC) provided financial and technical support to more than 25 Arab Americans seeking local, state and national office.

◆ In the fall, AAI organized a series of candidate forums in New Jersey, Michigan, Ohio and Virginia, states with high concentrations of Arab Americans. Just as with the events in the spring, high-level surrogates and candidates locked in hotly contested races were in attendance and spoke.

◆ In the waning days of the campaign, grassroots community leaders mobilized thousands of Arab Americans in get-out-the-vote drives. In Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and Virginia, AAI organized volunteers to make phone calls and distribute voter education materials for Arab Americans.

◆ AAI also procured voter registration lists in eleven states and identified over 1 million likely Arab American voters. Approximately 300,000 Arab American voters received specially designed mailings and phone calls from the two candidates and state campaigns.

## Election Research and [www.aaiusa.org](http://www.aaiusa.org)

◆ AAI also commissioned a series of polls during the campaign season to better gauge the political views and attitudes of the community. This information was assembled in the form of a report and has been widely circulated.

◆ Finally, AAI's website reached thousands of Arab American voters. Its "Campaign 2000" section served as a comprehensive election database and guide to candidates, campaigns and events. In the five weeks leading up to the election, nearly fifty thousand users logged on for election information, recording over one million hits. and candidates locked in hotly contested races were in attendance and spoke.

Visit "Campaign 2000" on AAI's website for more information!

## Arab American Candidates in 2000

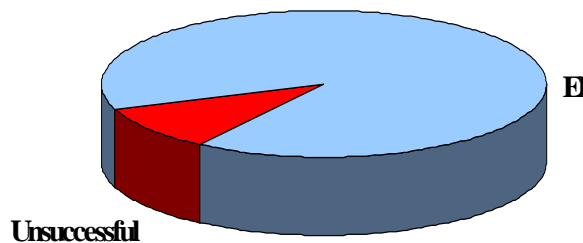
- CA** **Darrell Issa** for US House of Representatives, (R-48) – **WON (61%)**  
**Ron Dudum** for San Francisco Board of Supervisor – *LOST (15.8%)*
- CT** State Senator **David Cappiello** for reelection (R-24) – **WON**  
State Representative **William A. Hamzy** for reelection (R-78) – **WON**  
State Representative **Michael Jarjura** for reelection (D-74) – **WON**
- IL** U.S. Representative **Ray LaHood** for reelection (R-18) – **WON (67%)**
- KY** State Senator **David K. Karem** for reelection (D-35) – **WON (70%)**
- LA** U.S. Representative **Christopher John** for reelection (D-7) – **WON (84%)**
- ME** U.S. Representative **John Elias Baldacci** for reelection (D-2) – **WON (73%)**
- MI** U.S. Senator **Spencer Abraham** for reelection (R) – *LOST (49%)*  
**Annette J. Berry** for Circuit Court Judge - **WON**  
Oakland Sheriff **Michael J. Bouchard** for reelection – **WON**  
**Diane Dickow D'Agostini** for District Judge of the 48<sup>th</sup> District – **WON (60%)**  
Oakland County Probate Judge **Linda Saoud Hallmark** for reelection – **WON**  
**Macomb County Treasurer Ted B. Wahby** for reelection (D) – **WON (56%)**
- MO** **Stephen L. Danner** for US House of Representatives (D) – *LOST (47%)*
- NH** Governor **Jeanne Shaheen** for reelection (D) – **WON (49%)**  
U.S. Representative **John E. Sununu** for reelection (R-01) – **WON (54%)**
- NJ** **Hassan Fahmy** for Borough of Prospect Park Council (D) - **WON**  
**Hassan Cona** for Haledon Council
- NY** **Maurice Salem** for 99<sup>th</sup> District Assembly - *LOST*
- OH** **Ignatius DeMio** for State School Board – *LOST*  
**Mary Rose Oakar** for State Representative (D-13) – **WON**
- PA** State Representative **Camille 'Bud' George** for reelection (D-74) - **WON**
- RI** State Representative **John Barr** for reelection (D-59) – **WON (60.5%)**  
State Senator **Dan Issa** for reelection (D-35) – **WON**  
State Senator **Hanna Gallo** for reelection (D-12) – **WON (70.2%)**
- TN** State Representative **James Naifeh** for reelection (D-81) - **WON**
- TX** **Alvin Khoury** for District Judge of the 124<sup>th</sup> Judicial District
- WV** U.S. Representative **Nick Rahall** for reelection (D-3) – **WON (92%)**

Visit "Campaign 2000" on AAI's website for more information!

## Selected Candidates in 2000 Endorsed by AALPAC\*

- CA**    **Dana Rohrabacher** (R) beat Ted Crisell for U.S. House (45<sup>th</sup>)
- IL**    **Jesse Jackson, Jr.** (D) beat Robert Gordon for U.S. House (2<sup>nd</sup>)
- IN**    **John Hostettler** (R) beat Paul Perry for U.S. House (8<sup>th</sup>)
- MI**    **Dave Camp** (R) beat Lawrence Hollenbeck for U.S. House (4<sup>th</sup>)  
**David Bonior** (D) beat Tom Turner for U.S. House (10<sup>th</sup>)  
**Joe Knollenberg** (R) beat Matthew Frumin for U.S. House (11<sup>th</sup>)  
**John Conyers** (D) beat William Ashe for U.S. House (14<sup>th</sup>)  
**John Dingell** (D) beat William Morse for U.S. House (16<sup>th</sup>)
- NJ**    **Donald Payne** (D) beat Dirk Weber for U.S. House (10<sup>th</sup>)
- NY**    **Sherwood Boehlert** (R) beat David Vickers for U.S. House (23<sup>rd</sup>)
- OH**    **Marcy Kaptur** (D) beat Dwight Bryan for U.S. House (9<sup>th</sup>)  
**Dennis Kucinich** (D) beat Bill Smith, Jr. for U.S. House (10<sup>th</sup>)
- PA**    **Bob Brady** (D) beat Steven Kush for U.S. House (1<sup>th</sup>)
- VA**    **Jim Moran** (D) beat Demaris Miller for U.S. House (8<sup>th</sup>)  
**Tom Davis** (R) beat Michael Corrigan for U.S. House (11<sup>th</sup>)

**Candidates Supported by  
Arab American Leadership PAC**



Visit "Campaign 2000" on AAI's website for more information!

# The birth of an Arab-American lobby

October 12, 2000  
The Economist

“YOU cannot spill a drop of American blood”, Herman Melville once wrote, “without spilling the blood of the whole world.” A modern Melville might add that, thanks to its ethnic diversity, you cannot spill a drop of foreign blood without spilling the blood of an American family. Watch the news in any great American city and you get the impression that the world stops at the city limits. Walk into any ethnic enclave, however, and you find people obsessed by politics “back home” ...

It is hardly news that the Middle East looms large in New York city, where so many Jews live. Both Rick Lazio and Hillary Clinton have made a point of denouncing the United States for its failure to veto the United Nations Security Council’s resolution to censure Israel over the outbreak of violence in the Middle East. But the Middle East looms equally large in one of the key swing states in America’s mid-west, Michigan.

Visit Dearborn, the Detroit suburb that is home to the Ford car company, and you are reminded of the Middle East at every turn. A \$15m mosque, billed as the country’s biggest, is springing up opposite Ford’s world headquarters; the car firm’s famous River Rouge factory stands opposite a gritty Little Arabia, complete with shops selling live chickens. Both the head of the United Auto Workers, Steve Yokich, and Ford’s boss, Jac Nasser, boast Arab blood, as do 10,000 local engineers and most local petrol-station owners.

There are around 3.5m Arab-Americans in the United States, compared with just over 6m Jews. But they are unusually concentrated in

industrial swing states, such as New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Illinois as well as Michigan. There are about 300,000 ethnic Arabs in the Detroit metropolitan area, the biggest concentration of Arabs anywhere in the world outside the Middle East.

Dearborn is in turmoil over events in Israel and Palestine. There have been street protests and candlelight vigils every night since the fighting broke out, some of them drawing as many as 3,000 people. The mood is one of anger and frustration, says Nasser Beydoun, head of the American Arab Chamber of Commerce: anger at what the Israelis are doing and frustration at the way the American establishment sides instinctively with the Israelis.

In fact, the Arab-Americans are making a better job of getting the establishment to listen to their case than they ever did before. George W. Bush visited Dearborn on October 5th to talk to leaders of the community, the first time a presidential candidate has ever made such a gesture. He also sent Condoleezza Rice, his foreign-policy guru, to talk to a rather bigger group, in what proved to be a highly charged meeting...

Why have politicians started paying attention to a group that was once regarded as so dodgy that in 1984 Walter Mondale returned its donations? The obvious reason is that Arab-Americans are archetypal swing voters—Reagan Democrats

turned reluctant Clintonians—who make up a potentially decisive 4% of the electorate in a potentially decisive state. But there is also a more subtle story about the creation of a political machine.

They are also flexing their political muscles, galvanised not just by events in the Middle East but also by immigration reform, harassment at airports (“flying while Arab”) and the FBI’s use of secret evidence against immigrants in deportation cases.

The Arab-American Institute, which was founded by James Zogby in 1985, has led a relentless drive to increase Arab-American voting registration. When Mr Zogby visited Dearborn in 1985, only 700 of the 18,000 local Arabs were registered and the mayor was running on an anti-Arab ticket. These days registration has skyrocketed, and the same mayor has Arab-Americans in his cabinet.

In 1996, 62% of registered Arab-American voters turned up to the polls, somewhat more than the national average. Most of the community’s ties are to the Democrats, but this year they will turn out in force for the Republican Senator Spencer Abraham, a Dearborn Arab-American. And they may even help another Arab-American: a forthcoming poll by John Zogby, James’s brother, reckons one in six will plump for Ralph Nader.

The pro-Israel lobby is far better organised and financed than its putative rival. But now there is at least a putative rival—and that is quite a change in American politics.

# Bush chats with Arab Americans on issues

## Leaders say meeting eased some concerns

October 6, 2000  
By Niraj Warikoo  
Detroit Free Press

### Detroit Free Press

In an hour-long discussion, presidential candidate George W. Bush met with more than 30 Arab and Muslim-American leaders in Dearborn on Thursday and promised he would "act with more fairness" on issues important to their community.

The Republican Texas governor, with the help of Gov. John Engler, has reached out to the Arab-American community in the past month by criticizing President Bill Clinton and his Democratic opponent Vice President Al Gore for supporting policies that Bush says have led to airport profiling and the use of Immigration and Naturalization Service evidence used in deportations. Engler spokesman John Truscott, who noted Thursday that he is of Arab descent, said that Arab Americans are an important voting bloc in Michigan, a battleground state in the presidential election.

Engler arranged and attended the meeting, held at the Hyatt Regency in Dearborn. During the talk, Bush aides gave the Arab-American leaders a two-page handout in English and Arabic explaining his views on domestic issues. "Under the Clinton-Gore administration, Arab-American air travelers have experienced harassment and delay simply because of their ethnic heritage," Bush said in his statement.

"Such indiscriminate uses of passenger profiling are wrong and must be stopped." At the meeting, Bush also talked about his respect for different cultures and the "Abrahamic" religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Bush has often referred to mosques, along with churches and synagogues, as important institutions.

"It was a very positive meeting, a very understanding atmosphere," said Imam Mohamad Ali Elahi, of

Islamic House of Wisdom in Dearborn Heights. "He addressed all the issues and questions we had."

The leaders stressed, though, that they have differences with Bush, especially on foreign policy issues such as the United States' special relationship with Israel and Iraqi sanctions that they say have killed thousands of children, and moving the capital of Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a move that Bush supports, but which is seen as anti-Arab. The differences with Gore are slight, they said. And some were concerned that Bush's Thursday meeting was not publicized.

The issue is a sensitive one for Arab-Americans, who in years past have been kept at arm's length by politicians because of their background and association with Middle East problems.

## Gore Reaches Out to Arab Community

October 15, 2000  
By Helen Kennedy  
New York Daily News

### DAILY NEWS

DETROIT- Vice President Gore reached out yesterday to Arab-Americans angered at his support of Israel, saying both sides have suffered in the violence exploding in the Middle East.

"As we grieve for those who were affected by the violence there, we think not only of the Americans, we think also of the Palestinians and Israelis and the suffering the families on both sides have felt," Gore told 2,000 union supporters at a morning rally before heading back to Washington for his son's high school football game.

"The scenes have been heartrending, and it is time for us to lift them up in prayers as well." Gore's opponent, Gov. George W. Bush, spent the day at his Texas ranch. Gore had angered the Arab

immigrant community in Michigan — the nation's largest — by declaring support for Israel without mentioning Palestinian grievances. On Friday, he abruptly canceled a meeting with Arab-American leaders to attend White House meetings about the Navy destroyer Cole explosion and the Middle East fighting.

"I believe in a secure Israel, but is it fair for children to die to keep Israel secure?" asked Terry Ahwal of the Ramallah Federation in Dearborn, home to the largest concentration of Arab immigrants in the nation. "He is hurting himself," Ahwal said. "We do matter.... We vote."

Two new Michigan polls showed a tight race, with Bush having erased Gore's previous slight lead. The last debate will be held Tuesday in St.

Louis. But violence and tragedy abroad is likely to make direct attacks look unseemly, and the "town hall" format, with voters asking the candidates questions, will curb most back-and-forth. Barring a major mistake, both candidates must now rely on TV ads and a final blitz of cross-country campaigning.

Both plan to boost their ad spending to about \$5 million this week. But Bush has a big advantage — the Republican National Committee announced yesterday it had raised a record \$188.6 million this year, compared with \$119 million for the Democrats. The Republicans had \$54 million left to spend on ads and get-out-the-vote measures in the next three weeks, more than twice the Democrats' \$26 million.

## A New Fight for Arab Votes

Their support could make the difference in close states

October 23, 2000

By Michael Isikoff

NEWSWEEK

Not long into last week's debate, George W. Bush made a brief, cryptic remark in response to a question about racial discrimination. "Arab-Americans are racially profiled in what's called 'secret evidence'," he said. "People are stopped, and we got to do something about that."

The line probably flew right by most viewers. But to many Arab-Americans, it was the most dramatic moment of the campaign. "Within a few seconds I got 31 calls on my cell phone," says Osama Siblani, publisher of an Arab-American newspaper in Michigan. "People were excited." It's not hard to see why.

For years, Arab-Americans have been virtually invisible in presidential campaigns. In 1984

Walter Mondale returned campaign contributions from Arab-American leaders to avoid alienating Jewish voters. In 1996 Bob Dole canceled a meeting with Arab-American activists for similar reasons.

But in this year's tight race, Arab-Americans are reveling in newfound

power. Their votes could prove decisive in key states like Michigan, Ohio and New Jersey, where many of the country's 1.5 million registered Arab-American voters live. In super-close Michigan, Arab-Americans make up about 150,000 voters, far outstripping the state's roughly 40,000 Jewish voters.

Though both Bush and Gore are staunchly pro-Israel, each of the candidates has quietly but aggressively courted Arab-Americans with mailings, videos and town-hall meetings. Gore met with Arab-American leaders in Detroit more than a year ago and was scheduled to do so again last week when the riots in Israel forced him back to Washington. Yet many Arab-Americans prefer Bush.

With the help of George Salem, a Palestinian-born Washington lawyer, the Texas governor has raked in more than \$1 million from Arab-American donors. Aides of GOP Sen. Spencer Abraham, the Senate's only Arab-American, urged Bush to hammer Gore on anti-Arab discrimi-

nation during the debate. As it turned out, Bush got his facts mixed up. He confused racial profiling at airports—when security officers single out Arabs for questioning—with "secret evidence" cases, in which U.S. officials use a little-known federal law to detain suspected terrorists without disclosing the evidence against them.

But to many Arab-Americans, the confusion hardly mattered. "This was the first time any presidential candidate has ever mentioned Arab-Americans," says Khalil Jahshan of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. When hostilities broke out in Israel the morning after the debate, Bush's remarks boosted his image as the candidate more open to their concerns. This week pollster John Zogby will release a survey showing Bush beating Gore among Arab-Americans 40 to 28—a sure sign Bush's remarks about the group won't be his last.

# Presidential hopefuls court Arab Americans

November 7, 1999  
Associated Press



Presidential candidates on Saturday wooed Arab-American voters, speaking electronically or by proxy at the American National Leadership Conference in Dearborn.

The conference was sponsored by the Washington-based Arab American Institute, a nonpartisan organization that promotes political involvement by Americans of Middle Eastern descent.

Vice President Al Gore said, via satellite: "I commend you for your involvement and your dynamic embrace of American society."

Former Mississippi Gov. Ray Mabus spoke to the group on behalf of Gore's rival for the Democratic presidential nomination, former New Jersey Sen. Bill Bradley.

Sen. John McCain of Arizona, a contender for the Republican nomination, addressed the group Saturday evening by satellite. The leading GOP candidate, Texas Gov. George W. Bush, said his schedule did not allow him to speak to the group, said James Zogby, the institute's executive director.

Gore praised Arab-Americans' regard for tradition, art, commerce, family and God.

He said that as president, he would work to get rid of "hateful stereotypes," fueled in part by the practice of airport profiling, in which airline passengers may be questioned or searched based to some degree on their appearance.

Profiling has long been a sensitive issue among Arab-Americans in the Detroit area, who number between 250,000 and 300,000 -- one of the largest concentrations of Arabic people outside the Middle East.

Gore defended President Clinton's efforts on behalf of peace in the Middle East, and said the United States "will be there every step of the way" as Israel seeks to reconcile with its Palestinian and other Arabic neighbors.

The vice president also pledged to work toward better relations with Iraq. Despite ongoing hostility between the United States and President Saddam Hussein, Gore said, "We still don't feel it's a confrontation between peoples."

But U.S. policy toward Iraq drew angry condemnation from a conference participant, who is not Arab-American.

Erik Gustafson, of Washington, D.C., who said he began performing humanitarian work in Iraq after serving in the Army during the Gulf War, said United Nations sanctions and military actions have caused the deaths of 600,000 Iraqi civilians during the Clinton administration.

"Many of us will see a Gore administration as a death sentence for a few hundred of thousands more in Iraq," Gustafson told Janet Murguia, a deputy Gore campaign manager who spoke to the group after the vice president's remarks.

Many of the 100 people in the audience applauded loudly. Ms. Murguia did not respond.

McCain focused most of his remarks on U.S. policy in the Middle East. He called the UN sanctions only a part of the problem in Iraq, where Saddam has been allowed to resume exporting billions of dollars' worth of oil.

McCain said he supported the 1998 Iraq Liberation Act, which provides for arming Iraqi opposition groups. Saddam, he said, has "proven he is a repressive and dictatorial leader ... he must be removed from power."

A few in the audience booed when McCain criticized the Iranian-backed Hezbollah guerrillas operating in Lebanon near Israel's northern border, and when he reiterated his support for recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the site of the U.S. Embassy.

Asked by Zogby whether he could

duplicate Clinton's popularity among both Jewish- and Arab-Americans, McCain said: "I give this president high marks for communication skills. My problem with this president is, he butterflies around from issue to issue and thinks foreign policy is social work."

Mabus, speaking for Bradley, echoed much of what Gore said, including praise for Arab-Americans' assimilation into mainstream U.S. society while preserving their traditional values.

"The vibrancy of America comes not just from Americans who have been here, but from those who chose to come here," Mabus said.

American policy in the Middle East need not be "either-or," Mabus said. "Support for Israel does not assume hostility to the Arab countries."

Mabus emphasized what he said would be Bradley's priority as president -- ensuring that all American children were healthy, well-educated and protected against poverty. Mabus also repeated Bradley's call for campaign finance reform, saying, "the ideas of democracy should be stronger than the size of wallets."

The Arab American Institute invited the two leading candidates from the two major parties to address the gathering, Zogby said.

After Bush said he would be unavailable Saturday, the institute invited stand-ins including Gov. John Engler and Lt. Gov. Dick Posthumus but got no response, Zogby said.

While acknowledging that Arab-Americans tend to vote Democratic, Zogby downplayed Bush's unavailability.

"It's maybe a different approach to organizing," he said. "They're raising money -- we're not raising money tonight."

# Arab Americans earned political status

## Detroit Free Press

October 27, 2000

By James Zogby

Detroit Free Press

Michigan's Arab Americans are quite excited about the attention we are receiving this election season. Both Vice President Al Gore and Texas Gov. George W. Bush have met with our community leaders. Tipper Gore, Democratic vice presidential candidate Sen. Joseph Lieberman and Bush's foreign policy adviser, Condoleezza Rice, have also visited us.

All of this attention is quite remarkable, especially when one considers that this is the first election where any major presidential candidate has met with any group of Arab Americans. Even more remarkable has been the focus on Arab-American issues. Bush sent shock waves through the community when he mentioned Arab Americans concerns with secret evidence and profiling during the second presidential debate.

Just a few days later, Gore elaborated his views on these same issues before a Michigan labor rally. This put both candidates on the record supporting two of the top civil rights issues on the Arab-American agenda. Why is this all so remarkable? Why is it happening this year? And why the focus on Michigan?

This election is one of the closest in recent history. Michigan is one of 2000's most hotly contested battleground states. And because of Arab Americans' high voter turnout (62 percent in 1996's presidential election), Michigan's 350,000 Arab Americans could account for more than three percent of the state's vote.

Prior to this election, Arab Americans were not fully recognized as an

organized voting constituency. More than 15 years of massive voter registration and political mobilization efforts have only recently put us on the nation's political map. The path that brought us to this point was not free of obstacles. It was the Jesse Jackson campaigns of '84 and '88 that first energized Arab Americans and welcomed us as an organized community into presidential politics. Arab Americans accounted for more than 10 percent of Jackson's victory in the 1988 Michigan caucus.

But while Jackson welcomed Arab Americans, others did not. Some candidates, like Walter Mondale in 1984, returned donations to Arab Americans. Others like Republican Ed Zschau, running for U.S. Senate in California in 1986, and Michael Dukakis in 1988 rejected Arab-American endorsements. Arab Americans fought on for respect and empowerment. An early sign that we were being recognized came in 1996 in the midst of Israel's bombing of Lebanon.

During that unfolding tragedy, I received a call from a Democratic political operative who asked me point-blank, "Is that stuff going on in Lebanon going to hurt us in Michigan this November?" The import of the question was clear, and within a matter of days our Michigan leaders mobilized more than 3,000 Arab Americans to come to Washington to demonstrate their concern. When the White House became aware of our plans, we were invited to a meeting with the president's national security adviser, who within hours responded posi-

tively to four of the community's demands.

The stage was thus set for 2000. As the frequency and intensity of candidate outreach increased this year, Arab Americans have come to recognize the importance of our vote and the impact we can have on domestic and foreign policy concerns. We have come to realize that we have, especially in times of crisis such as the one that is now unfolding in the Middle East, the ability to shape a more balanced and reasoned national discourse. And when we oppose infringements of immigrants' rights, we are protecting the Constitution for future generations. With all this attention, how will we vote?

Some important groups in the community have made public endorsements, but a recent poll conducted for the Arab American Institute establishes that the Arab-American vote is still up for grabs. About 40 percent currently express support for Bush, as opposed to about 28 percent for Gore. Another 16 percent express support for Ralph Nader, an Arab American running on the Green Party ticket. Fifteen percent are still undecided.

Since many of those polled indicated that their votes may shift, it appears that Arab Americans are still looking. This in itself is impressive. Recognizing their responsibility and relishing their newfound status, Arab Americans have become a swing vote constituency. Having reached this stage of empowerment, there is no turning back. Arab Americans are now a fixture on Michigan's and America's political maps.

If we seem excited and pleased, understand why. We've known the humiliation of exclusion and rejection and now we're being courted. Believe me, being courted is a lot more fun.

## Candidates Abuse NY Arabs

November 3, 2000

By James Zogby

Newsday

FOR ONE group of New Yorkers, this year's Senate race has been a painful experience in political exclusion. Not once, since this campaign season began, has either Rick Lazio or Hillary Rodham Clinton made an effort to reach out to the state's 340,000 Arab Americans.

While both candidates crisscross New York seeking the support of diverse groups of voters, Arab-American churches and mosques are ignored and their invitations rejected. On one occasion, Clinton was asked by a network news reporter if she had any intention of reaching out to Arab Americans. Her response might have been polite or politic; she chose instead a curt "no." Recently, the treatment has gone from ignored and excluded to used and abused. In a crass and transparent effort to court Jewish support, Lazio challenged Clinton to return contributions from members of the American Muslim Alliance—a mostly Pakistani-American group of professionals. Compounding this, the state Republican party launched a statewide phone

campaign that attempted to link Clinton's donors with terrorism, and then with the bombing of the USS Cole.

New York's tabloid press has feasted off this story of Muslim intrigue, terror, money and the Clintons—creating more pain for New York's Arab Americans and Muslim Americans.

This was not the first time Arab Americans were excluded in a New York election. In 1989, David Dinkins' first mayoral campaign rejected Arab-American involvement. And this was not the first time this year that Clinton's Arab-American donors were held up for public ridicule.

Rudolph Giuliani denounced Clinton for having received contributions from a Washington-based Palestinian-American businessman described as an "Arafat crony." The individual was, in fact, a business partner of former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres. A few months later, Lazio also tried Arab baiting.

Clinton was attacked for receiving a contribution from American

University professor Clovis Maksoud, who was described as "a critic of Israel." What is shocking to Arab Americans is that 2000 has been a banner year for our community's political efforts. We've been courted by both the Al Gore and George W. Bush campaigns, and also have an Arab American (Ralph Nader) running for president. While candidates seek Arab-American support in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania, in New York both Senate campaigns have hung a "No Arabs Allowed" sign over their headquarters.

I cannot accept that any group of New Yorkers has been impressed by either candidate's callous disregard for Arab Americans. By ignoring the community and excluding it from participation in the campaigns, both candidates have violated Arab Americans' civil rights by effectively disenfranchising them. As a native New Yorker and an Arab American, I'm both ashamed and hurt.

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