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Contact: Linda Sarsour, National Advocacy Director, 917.306.3323,
lsarsour@accesscommunity.org

National Arab American groups join forces to register voters in communities across US

DEARBORN, Mich. - The National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC), a project of ACCESS, along with the Network for Arab American Professionals (NAAP); the Arab American Institute (AAI), and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), have joined forces to launch a National Arab American Voter Registration Day this **Friday, September 26**, on the heels of the National Voter Registration Day which took place earlier this week.

This national day of action will serve to help register voters and raise awareness around the significance of civic participation for Arab Americans. The message the groups will promote is that voting can be used as a tool to change the policies that directly impact them, including unwarranted surveillance by federal and local law enforcement and lack of access to culturally and linguistically competent social services. Arab Americans will also take to Twitter on Friday, using the hashtag **#MyArabAmVote** to share experiences and issues that motivate them to get out and vote.

“We have worked for years to build the political power of the Arab American community, and this year is no different. Participation in the democratic process is one way to change the status of our community and address civil rights concerns that impact Arab Americans,” said *Nadia Tordova, Director of the National Network for Arab American Communities.*

"Voting is the basic building block of democracy. Proper representation is next to impossible without it, which is why it is necessary for us to not only engage our communities on getting registered and getting out the vote, but also to preserve the voting rights they are entitled to, “ said *Samer Khalaf, President, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee.*

“With high concentrations of Arab Americans living in some of the largest and most politically contested states, we know our community can make a difference this November as states elect governors, Congressional representatives and countless local officials,” says *Executive Director of the Arab American Institute Maya Berry.* “Arab Americans are at the forefront of the national conversation on voting rights – whether through our ‘Yalla Vote’ initiative, which was at university campuses across the country this week, or our online resources for voters and efforts to combat restrictive voter identification laws.”

Ensuring our community is registered and mobilized to vote for elections is the starting point for influencing how politicians interact with us locally – the first question always asked by your politician is “Does your community vote? How many votes do you have?” said *Sarab Al-Jijakli, President, Network for Arab American Professionals.*

“As someone who has lived in New York for more than 40 years, I have seen firsthand the progress that has been made in the Arab American community. I attribute that to the increased participation and sophistication in the democratic process. We will continue to grow and build our power, and this national day of action is one way to do that,” *said Dr. Ahmad Jaber, President, at the Arab American Association of New York.*

"Arab-Americans need to use all the tools available to us to empower ourselves and better our community's condition in the U.S. We should register to vote and try to make a difference in the electoral process, but also know that real change in this country has only been made with community organizing and by challenging power directly,” *said Hatem Abudayyeh, Executive Director, Arab American Action Network in Chicago, IL.*

"When we, Arab Americans in Florida, do vote, we may not be heard right away. Building power takes persistency and consistency, and we are committed to doing just that. It is impossible to be heard at all when we are doing nothing and when we are not voting. We will continue to register voters and educate community members through candidate forums because we are in this for the long-term,” *said Rasha Mubarak, leader at the Arab American Community Center of Florida.*

“Today it is more important than ever for our community to engage in the democratic process by registering to vote. Arab Americans have a lot at stake, and we cannot afford to be absent at the polls otherwise our voices will not be heard,” *said Lena Alhusseini, Executive Director at the Arab American Family Support Center in Brooklyn, NY.*

“Our mission at AccessCal is to encourage members of our community to become contributing citizens,” *said Nahla Kayali, founder and executive director of Access California Services.* “Before we voice our opinions about social and political issues in the system, we need to practice our rights as citizens and vote. It’s how our community’s voice can be heard; It’s how our kids will receive a better education, gain access to quality healthcare, and enrich the fabric of our diverse country.

"National Arab American Voter Registration Day reminds us that the Arab American community in Flint, Michigan is connected to a larger national community. We look forward to building power across cities and empowering Arab Americans," *said Mona Sahouri, Executive Director of the Arab American Heritage Council.*

“Voter registration is a critical component to being an American. At Arab American Family Services we work with immigrants towards fulfilling their ultimate goal of citizenship and educate them of about their duty to be civically engaged. We are proud to participate in the National Arab American Voter Registration Day,” *said Itedal Shalabi, Executive Director of the Arab American Family Services in Bridgeview, Illinois.*

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The National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC), a project of ACCESS, is a national consortium of independent Arab American community-based organizations. Our **mission** is the development of Arab American community-based nonprofit organizations that understand, meet the needs, and represent the concerns of Arab Americans at a local level, while also collectively addressing those issues at a national level.