



Student Government

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GOVERNMENT

Student Senate

S.S.B.10

Sponsor: Senator Mohanty, Senator Ogbonna, Senator Bartlett

Student Senate Action: Passed/Failed/Tabled

An Act

Relating to the creation of a Middle Eastern, North African, and Arab (MENA) Constituency Senator

Section 1. Short Title

This bill may be titled as, “Creation of Middle Eastern, North African, and Arab (MENA) Constituency Senator.”

Section 2. Discussion

Whereas, the operational definition of an undergraduate MENA student at the University of Iowa is a student who has a cultural relationship and ethnically identifies with one of the following 22 countries that make up the MENA region of the world: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine/Israel, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

Whereas, Middle Eastern and North African students exist as part of a marginalized community that is treated as invisible on campus based on lack of demographic and cultural recognition,

Whereas, many universities across the United States have taken similar efforts to recognize this group. Included in this count, but not limited to, are other Midwestern universities: University of Illinois, University of Michigan, and Ohio State,

Whereas, the history of MENA is widely misunderstood as part of “white” history. The Eugenics movement and the idea of “Caucasian” identities are the basis for inclusion of this group in the white category. Inclusion was never a choice, but a survival tactic forced upon MENA populations who never experience the privileges of whiteness,

Whereas, lack of demographic recognition has caused systemic effects for MENA-Americans including that MENA peoples:

- a. Cannot legally be considered victims of hate crimes
- b. Are ineligible to apply for diversity-based government funded programs, as well as many UI DEI grants and scholarships
- c. Have disproportionate healthcare outcomes, as was noted during the COVID-19 pandemic
- d. Experience oppressive conditions in the U.S. like those Black and Latinx Americans face, including targeting by police, terrorism units, and other law enforcement agencies (e.g., TSA), and experience high rates of poverty
- e. Although not all MENA people are Muslim and not all Muslims are MENA, religious discrimination (Islamophobia) affects all MENA people in the U.S. due to stereotyping of followers of Islam as exclusively MENA,

Whereas, MENA students belong to a diverse region with wide varieties in religion, skin color, cultural traditions, and spoken languages,

Whereas, due to the history of colonization in the region, this position should be inclusive of any people belonging to an indigenous ethnic group from the MENA region. These groups include, but are not limited to, the Amazigh, Ma'dan, Tuaregs, Coptics, Assyrians, and the Bedouins.

Whereas, National Arab-American History Month (NAAHM) is federally recognized as of April 2022. This recognition shows that the federal government recognizes the differences between “white” history and history of Middle Eastern and North African people living in the U.S.,

Whereas, it is the duty of the Undergraduate Student Government to support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts on our campus and,

Whereas, University of Iowa Undergraduate Students Yasmina Sahir and Asel Nasr approached Undergraduate Student Government and co-wrote the legislation enacting a MENA Constituency Senator.

Section 3. Action

Because it is an unjust action to let another full academic year go by without MENA representation on USG while decisions regarding the status of BIPOC communities on campus is in question (i.e., constituency senator positions, cultural houses on campus and a proposed new multicultural center, etc.), a MENA representative will be elected for the 2023-2024 cycle.

For all future elections following the 2022-2023 academic year, USG will make the following amendments to its current bylaws which take effect for the 2023-2024 Legislative Election Cycle, with modifications highlighted in yellow:

Article II, Section A. Composition

1. The Student Senate shall be composed of 50 senators.
2. **Thirty-four** senators shall be elected according to the procedure in the Election Code.

3. **Eleven** senators shall be elected or appointed by the following constituencies with each constituency selecting one senator to serve on its behalf:

a. The following seven constituency senators will be elected in the spring election period through a USG-administered elections process according to procedure in the Elections Code.

1. Asian Pacific Islander Desi American
2. Black
3. International
4. Latinx
5. LGBTQ+
6. Disability
7. First-Generation

b. The remaining four constituency senators will be selected through an internal appointment or election process of the respective student organization in parentheses.

- Native American (Native American Student Association)
- Veteran (University of Iowa Veterans Association)
- Jewish (Hillel of the University of Iowa)
- Middle Eastern, North African, and Arab (Middle East, North African, Arab Student Association (MENASA))

Section 4. Enactment Clause

Therefore, be it enacted by the University of Iowa Undergraduate Student Government upon the signature of the President.

Alexis Carfrae, **Speaker of the Senate**

Alexis Carfrae

I hereby attest and certify that this resolution originated from the 2022-2023 Student Senate Session.

APPROVED on 11/15/22

Patrick Johnson, **USG President**

Patrick Johnson