

Item 2165

a Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) Category on Government Forms and Minority Business Classification

Committee Recommendation: Adopt | **Category:** Civil Rights

WHEREAS, the United States Census Bureau and all federal, state, and local government forms currently classify people of Middle Eastern and North African descent as "White," erasing the distinct identity, experiences, and needs of millions of Americans of Arab, Iranian, Turkish, Kurdish, Amazigh, Coptic, and other MENA backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, this misclassification means that MENA Americans are ineligible for minority business enterprise certifications, disadvantaged business programs, minority contracting preferences, and diversity grants at the federal, state, and local level, despite facing documented discrimination in employment, housing, law enforcement, and public life; and

WHEREAS, Texas is home to one of the largest and fastest-growing MENA populations in the United States, with significant communities in Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, Austin, and San Antonio who contribute to every sector of the Texas economy; and

WHEREAS, the Office of Management and Budget announced in 2024 that a separate MENA category would be added to the 2030 Census, but this change has not yet been implemented at the state or local level in Texas, and there is no guarantee that the federal change will extend to business classification and contracting programs; and

WHEREAS, without a distinct MENA checkbox on state and local government forms, MENA Texans cannot be accurately counted, their communities cannot receive equitable public investment, and MENA-owned businesses cannot access minority contracting programs designed to level the playing field for groups that face systemic barriers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Texas Democratic Party calls on the Texas Legislature to add a Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) category as a distinct racial and ethnic classification on all state government forms, surveys, and data collection instruments, separate from the "White" category; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Texas Democratic Party supports classifying MENA-owned businesses as eligible minority business enterprises for the purposes of state and local contracting preferences, procurement programs, and grant funding; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Texas Democratic Party calls on all Texas municipalities and counties to adopt the MENA category on local government forms and ensure that MENA residents and business owners can access the same minority contracting and grant programs available to other recognized minority groups; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Texas Democratic Party urges the federal government to implement the MENA category not only on the Census but across all federal contracting, small business, and grant programs administered by the SBA, HUD, DOT, and other agencies.