



COUNT MENA IN

ACTION ALERT

Act Now to Protect the Civil Rights of All Marginalized Groups, Including MENA Communities



Arab American Civic Council

What is the Latest?

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has proposed a change to Statistical Policy SPD 15 (SPD 15) which may require that all federal agencies, including the Census Bureau, collect data on Middle Eastern and North African individuals.

For the next three months, the OMB will be considering comments from the broader public on their proposed change. This is our chance to ensure that the government recognizes and meets the needs of MENA communities.

What is SPD 15?

SPD 15 outlines the minimum standards for data collection on race and ethnicity across the entire government. Federal agencies use Directive to track disparities between racial and ethnic groups and protect the civil rights of marginalized communities.

What Is NNAAC Doing?

NNAAC has drafted a series of public comments which state the many important reasons that the OMB should recognize MENA Americans in SPD 15.

For the next three months, NNAAC will be mobilizing its vast network of community-based organizations to push the OMB to provide for adequate representation of MENA Americans across the federal government.



Why Does This Matter?

SPD 15 has not been updated since 1997 and our national diversity has changed significantly. Meanwhile, conditions have gotten worse for marginalized groups, particularly for those not even recognized in federal data, like MENA Americans.

Updating SPD 15 is the first step toward much needed reforms of policy & programs to better address health disparities, uplift small businesses, and equal access to the ballot.

How Can I Contribute?

Just follow one of these links based on whether you want to advocate on behalf of yourself or an organization.

<https://p2a.co/CjJw3Xx>



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POLICY BRIEF

Through a series of policy reforms in the 1970s, Congress authorized the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to coordinate all federal agencies' statistical policies. Through Statistical Policy Directive Number 15 (SPD 15), the OMB sets the minimum standards for data collection on race and ethnicity across the federal government.

The OMB, which sits within the Executive Office of the President (EOP), uses these minimum standards to guide how federal agencies identify disparities between demographic groups and address them through policy and programs. Federal agencies use the data produced through these minimum standards to monitor equal access to public services for populations that experience discrimination and differential treatment due to race or ethnicity.

OMB's most recent guidance, last updated in 1997, defines "White" people as "a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa."¹ As a result, individuals from the Middle East or North Africa (MENA) must either self-identify as "White" or "Other" on Federal documents.²

This guidance contradicts a fact of American life born out in the social science research: MENA communities comprise underserved racial and ethnic minority groups of socially disadvantaged individuals.³ Worse, in perpetuating this contradiction, SPD 15 fails to deliver on the intended purpose of racial and ethnic data collection, dating back to the Civil Rights Movement: to integrate and uplift racial and ethnic minorities and protect them from individual and systemic discrimination.

On January 27, 2023, the OMB proposed a revision to SPD 15 that would add "Middle Eastern or North African" as a minimum reporting category and amend the definition of the "White" reporting category to no longer include MENA. The OMB is allowing the public to submit comment on their proposals until April 12, 2023. They are expected to finalize their revision of SPD 15 by summer of 2024.



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