
Turkish-Americans Need to be More Actively Involved in US Politics

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As the 32nd Annual Turkish-American National Convention began in Washington on Thursday, participants of the event urged Turkish-Americans to effectively participate in US politics to make their voices more widely heard. The convention was jointly organized by the Federation of Turkish American Associations (TADF), the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA) and the Washington-based Turkish American Community Centers (TACC). The event began with a seminar titled "Grassroots Day," hosted by the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA).

Delivering the opening speech of the seminar, ATAA President Günay Evinch said the Turkish-American community's influence in American society could be increased through their effective participation in American politics.

He said that although Turks are not warm to the idea of providing financial support to politicians, it is very important fund politics at the local and federal level during the run-up to elections.

"My grandfather used to tell me: It is not sufficient for you to be right, you also need to be convincing. As the Turkish-American community in the US, we need to be convincing about our arguments and lobbying efforts.

TCA President Lincoln McCurdy said although such a practice does not exist in Turkey it is very natural to provide financial support to politicians during elections. McCurdy noted that there are congressmen from other ethnic communities in the US Congress, adding that the Turkish-American community also needs at least two Turkish-American congressmen, including one Republican and one Democrat, in the US Congress. He said this can be achieved through the solidarity of Turkish-Americans with their candidates.

"Turks' active participation in US politics, either through supporting a candidate or nominating a Turk, will positively influence Turkish-American relations," he said, adding that the TCA aims to collect \$1 million in fundraising for the next elections in the US to this effect.

A former member of Congress, Mike McMahon, who delivered a speech at the seminar, called on Turks not to avoid introducing themselves and making their voices heard.

He said it is thanks to a Turk who visited him 10 years ago in his office that he can address the Turkish-American community now.

"Until a short time ago, many other communities came to us, but Turks did not. Yes, providing financial support to politicians is important, but that is not all. It is important for a politician to know the people they represent, and it is important for you to communicate with them," he said. (Source: Today's Zaman)