



2023 South Dakota Legislature

House Commemoration 8018

Introduced by: **Representative Nelson**

1 **A LEGISLATIVE COMMEMORATION, Honoring the life and legacy of U.S. Senator**
2 **James Abourezk.**

3 WHEREAS, James Abourezk was a lifelong public servant with a storied career. Abourezk
4 grew up on the Rosebud Indian Reservation and was one of five children born to Lebanese
5 immigrants. He joined the U.S. Navy and served in the Korean War, where he supported Navy
6 ships stationed in Japan. After his military service, Abourezk worked as a rancher, blackjack
7 dealer, and judo instructor, earned a degree in civil engineering, and, at the age of thirty-
8 two, pursued a law degree from the University of South Dakota; and

9 WHEREAS, Abourezk was a member of the Democratic Party and represented South
10 Dakota for single terms in the U.S. House and Senate during the 1970s, becoming the first
11 Arab American elected to the U.S. Senate. He fought passionately for farmers, consumers,
12 and Native American people. He chaired the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs and sparked
13 the creation of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, the American
14 Indian Religious Freedom Act, and the Indian Child Welfare Act. Abourezk fought against
15 natural gas deregulation and became an outspoken critic of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle
16 East. After leaving Congress, he continued to advocate for Native American and foreign policy
17 issues; and

18 WHEREAS, Abourezk married Sanaa Dieb in 1991 and is survived by four children, Charles,
19 Nikki, Paul, and Alya, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He passed away at
20 his home in Sioux Falls on February 24, 2023:

21 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT COMMEMORATED, by the Ninety-Eighth Legislature of the State
22 of South Dakota, the remarkable life and legacy of James Abourezk.