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FOR CONGRESS

PRO-ISRAEL POSITION

Admittedly, it has been many years since I visited the Holy Land, but my trip to Israel was one of the most profound and impactful events of my life. It not only informed my worldview, but it helped me to become a better servant to my constituents.

I have spent my entire adult life in public service. As County Executive of Dutchess County, I am committed to ensuring the safety and security of all of my constituents. Following the appearance of a number of anti-Semitic symbols and messages in our community, I directed our newly formed Human Rights Commission to work with the County Sheriff's office to help expose and bring those responsible for such hate to justice. In addition, I personally worked with local Jewish communities to make sure they felt safe and secure in our community.

Ensuring that safe haven for our Jewish brothers and sisters both here at home, and abroad in Israel continues to exist is a large part of why I'm running for Congress.

The United States must stand unwavering in its support for Israel, a crucial ally and longtime friend in the Middle East. Our nations enjoy a mutually beneficial security and economic partnership that forms the foundation of American foreign policy in the Middle East and our efforts to combat global terrorism. As a leader in Congress, I will assert our commitment to the security and prosperity of Israel. We will continue to stand with Israel.

Combatting Terrorism and Threats to Israeli Security

American efforts to combat the spread of terrorism and other forms of dangerous religious extremism depend on our cooperation with Israeli forces. It is therefore essential that we stand with Israel in defending itself against threats to its very existence. Two terrorist organizations, Hezbollah and Hamas, have stated publicly and repeatedly that they seek to destroy Israel and are backed by Iran in their efforts to do so. Using rocket attacks and suicide bombers, they repeatedly strike at Israel. U.S. foreign aid provides Israel with the financing and military technology to defend itself against these existential threats. When I'm in Congress, I will fight to maintain our aid to Israel so it can protect itself from these terrorist groups.

Investing in Israeli aid does more than just support our ally - it boosts our economy as well, by supporting American manufacturing and service businesses. The funding allocated for Israel's missile defense systems, such as the Iron Dome, is especially important for the nation's security given the present threat of terrorist rocket attacks. In providing Israel with our state-of-the-art technology, we not only invest in further innovation here in the United States, but we also equip Israel to be a strong ally in the pursuit of our peace and security objectives in the Middle East. This security partnership is critical to preventing the growth and funding of terrorist groups with the capacity to strike innocent victims anywhere in the world, such as ISIS.

The United States must therefore extend its support for Israel beyond the Middle East and into international institutions and agreements. I will use my influence as a Member of Congress to advocate for U.S. foreign policy that affirms Israel's right to a secure and prosperous existence. In the United Nations and other international organizations, the United States must continue to be a champion for Israel in the face of international condemnation. Sticking up for our friend in this way is crucial for maintaining global security against the threat of terrorism.

Preventing Iran From Becoming A Nuclear State

The Iran Nuclear Deal brokered by the Obama Administration was perhaps the biggest betrayal of our Israeli allies in this nations history. Iran cannot be allowed to obtain nuclear weapons capability and as a leader in Congress I will do everything in my power to prevent that from happening.

There is no room for negotiation on Iran creating any kind of nuclear capability. And allowing negotiations to stretch on forever only furthers their goal by delaying outside pressure and inspections. While sanctions still exist on the current regime in Tehran, they are not currently being enforced. That must change immediately. I will advocate for increased, regime-threatening sanctions on Iran and demand accountability and results of the sanctions.

Two-State Solution

By backing Israel, the United States puts it in a strong position to pursue peace with the Palestinians. I support a two-state solution to this conflict and urge the Palestinians to engage with Israel in direct, bilateral talks - without the meddling of the rest of the international community through a body like the United Nations. Engaging directly in bilateral talks will allow for each side to freely make their case and this process holds the best prospects for achieving peace. A permanent peace would be highly desirable for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

To achieve this, I will continue to support aid for Israel to put them in a strong negotiating position and allow them to defend themselves until the Palestinians engage in negotiations. I will also urge to the greatest extent possible the Palestinian government to end their boycott of U.S. and Israeli officials and cease seeking to impose demands on Israel through international bodies like the United Nations.

The Abraham Accords

The Abraham Accords are a powerful example of what is made possible through a strong U.S.-Israeli relationship. Signed in August 2020, this bilateral agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates has brought economic, cultural, and security benefits to both countries and can serve as an example for future diplomatic progress between Israel and its neighbors.

I fully support the landmark Abraham Accords and the prosperity it has brought Israel and its neighbors. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly 230,000 Israelis have travelled to the United Arab Emirates over the past year, creating cultural collaboration in the media, health, education, entertainment, and sports sectors. The deal has resulted in over \$570 million of commercial business between the nations, as well as defense-production and intelligence-sharing agreements which increase the stability of the Middle East.

Already, Israel has reached additional agreements with Sudan and Morocco. The support of the United States made the Abraham Accords possible, and we must continue to stand with Israel and seek opportunities for enhanced cooperation between it and its neighbors. In doing so, we stand to greatly increase the security and prosperity of the entire region.

Cultural and Economic Ties

In addition to the above-mentioned strategic incentives for a strong U.S.-Israel relationship, our countries are also fortunate to enjoy strong cultural ties. There are many sacred sites for Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Americans in Jerusalem, and we benefit spiritually from the access to these places our ties to Israel bring. Opportunities to engage in cross-cultural educational exchanges have brought further enrichment and cultural connection to our countries.

Israel, like the United States, has a reputation as a global center of innovation. Our nations each benefit by trading with the other; sharing technology and insights sparks entrepreneurial innovations and creates jobs here and in Israel. I will continue to support our cultural and economic ties to Israel as a Congressman, so that we both may continue to reap the fruits of this mutually beneficial relationship.

- Mark