

Congress Passes Historic Bill Dramatically Strengthening US – Israel Relationship

Dear Friends,

I wanted to share with you some news about the strong relationship between the US and Israel. The relationship between Israel and the US is vital to both. Israel remains an unshakeable and uniquely positioned ally of the US. Joined by common values and goals, The US and Israel share technology and discoveries. Equally as important, however, is that we share enemies. It is the explicit intention and goal of Iran, Syria and others to eradicate the State of Israel from the world map. This threat to Israel is shared with the US and its installations worldwide. Given opportunity and means, the desired fate of the US would be stated by her enemies in the same terms as are used for Israel.

For these reasons, word of the most recent bill passed by Congress is of particular import. Congress has now passed the bill known as the United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act (S.2673). This historic measure will dramatically strengthen and expand the U.S.-Israel alliance as a way to confront new threats and challenges in the Middle East.

Congress today completed adoption of the landmark legislation when the House approved the final version of the bill. AIPAC praises the effective, bipartisan leadership of Reps. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Ted Deutch (D-FL), Ed Royce (R-CA) , Eliot Engel (D-NY) and Sens. Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Roy Blunt (R-MO).

By declaring in legislation that Israel is a “major strategic partner” of the United States, the bill lays the foundation for significantly expanded U.S.-Israel cooperation in a wide variety of spheres, including defense, intelligence, homeland security, cyber security, energy, water, agriculture and alternative fuel technologies.

Included in the legislation are the following major provisions:

- Declares that Israel is a “major strategic partner” of the United States.
- Expands authority for forward-deployed U.S. weapons stockpiles in Israel, providing additional critical military equipment for either nation to use in a crisis.
- Upgrades Israel’s trade status to expedite export licensing.

- Encourages the inclusion of Israel in the Visa Waiver Program, which will help facilitate travel to the United States by Israeli citizens without needing a visa.
- Authorizes the president to provide assistance to promote cooperation in such fields as energy, water, homeland security, agriculture and alternative fuel technologies.
- Creates new mechanisms to connect America and Israel in enhanced energy cooperation, including the establishment of a U.S.-Israel Center of Excellence in energy and water engineering, and supports the development of R&D and academic partnership opportunities.
- Increases the frequency and detail of U.S. government reporting on Israel's qualitative military edge.

Because of this development, coupled with other bills being voted on simultaneously in Israel, I will speak on Shabbat morning about the current situation in Israel. I hope to see you in services on Shabbat. I will post my comments afterwards for those unable to attend. In the meantime, I hope that you will join me in applauding Congress for passing this important bill, The US – Israel Strategic Partnership Act.

Shabbat Shalom,

Neil S. Cooper, Rabbi