

## **Laura Fine for Congress Israel Position Paper**

As a proud Jewish woman, the safety, security, and prosperity of the State of Israel are deeply personal issues to me. I grew up in a conservative synagogue, became a Bat Mitzvah in Israel, and my husband and I have raised our children with the values of Tikkun Olam. The tenets of Judaism provide the foundations of my values and have guided me and my family.

These deep seeded values drive me to stand up for my community and use my platform to combat antisemitism. As a Co-Chair of the Illinois Legislative Jewish Caucus, I have worked with universities to protect our Jewish students, I have blocked legislation that would be painful to my community from coming to the floor of the Illinois Senate, and I have championed legislation to increase security funding to synagogues, Jewish day schools, and community centers.

It is important to me to use my position to educate and bring forth policy to lend a voice to the Jewish community. From holding news conferences at the state capitol about the rise and dangers of increased antisemitism, to hosting town hall meetings on hate and intolerance to securing funding for the Simon Wiesenthal Mobile Museum of Tolerance and the Illinois Holocaust Museum, it is essential to have more Jewish voices in elected office. To educate and inform, I passed a resolution recognizing May as Jewish American Heritage Month in the State of Illinois. This resolution highlights the vitality and importance of Jewish Illinoisans whose achievements and contributions enrich our great state.

### **Illinois and Israel: A deep connection**

Illinois is home to one of the largest Jewish populations in the country and has a proud history of collaboration with Israel. From trade partnerships and academic exchanges to water conservation initiatives and medical research, the Illinois-Israel relationship is strong and mutually beneficial.

The communities that I represent and have called home for almost my entire life, including Glenview, Northbrook, Skokie, Evanston, and the far North Side of Chicago, are all home to vibrant, diverse Jewish communities. That's why, as a legislator, I've worked to direct state resources to institutions that preserve memory and inspire action, such as the Illinois Holocaust Museum – an institution whose mission to “remember the past and transform the future” resonates now more than ever. I have also supported partnerships that facilitate research and innovation partnerships between Illinois-based institutions and Israeli universities, including those working on mental health, clean energy, and public health.

## **The War in Gaza**

On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a barbaric attack, killing over 1,200 innocent people and seizing 251 hostages. The devastating war that followed has claimed the lives of far too many innocent Palestinian civilians, leaving countless families in heartbreak and grief.

Hamas has demonstrated through its violent attacks on Israeli civilians, use of Palestinian civilians as human shields, and inhumane treatment of the Israeli hostages that they reject peaceful coexistence and deliberately undermine efforts toward stability. Hamas must surrender its weapons and remaining leadership brought to justice. It should not be permitted to participate in the future of Gaza.

At the same time, we must confront the devastating humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza. The images of children, families, and entire communities facing famine, trauma, and displacement demand an urgent global response. Delivering food, medical care, and critical aid must be a top priority, even as we work to uphold Israel's right to self-defense and long-term security.

The United States has an essential role to play – not in dictating outcomes, but in advancing a durable peace through diplomacy, humanitarian support, and partnerships with regional allies. We must remain clear-eyed about the threats, steadfast in our values, and committed to a future rooted in justice, safety, and hope for all.

## **The U.S.–Israel Relationship: Democracy and Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Israel is more than just a strategic ally, it is a beacon of democracy in one of the world's most volatile regions. Since its founding in 1948 and the immediate recognition by President Harry Truman, the relationship between the United States and Israel has been rooted in shared values: democracy, pluralism, innovation, and a mutual commitment to peace and security.

I fully support the current portfolio of U.S. security assistance to Israel, including the \$3.8 billion annual commitment laid out in the U.S.-Israel Memorandum of Understanding, which includes critical funding for weapons systems that defend Israeli civilians. These programs are vital to the U.S. defense industrial base, support American jobs, and enhance our own national security. I look forward to working on new and creative ways for the US and Illinois to partner with Israel to tackle the challenges of the future.

I do not support additional conditions on aid to Israel, militarily or otherwise. While the US and Israel may not always agree on certain issues, halting or conditioning aid is not the right mechanism to solve our disputes or pressure our key allies.

The U.S. benefits directly from our close relationship with Israel. From economic innovation and water conservation to life-saving medical and cybersecurity technologies, Israel's advancements strengthen our communities here at home. My family has benefited from a medical innovation developed in Israel; a focused ultrasound (FUS), a procedure that reduces and/or eliminates tremors associated with Parkinson's disease.

### **Confronting the Iranian Threat**

Iran continues to pose a grave threat to Israel, regional stability, and global peace. Iran's support for terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and many other militant groups in the region, its past entrenchment in Syria, and its pursuit of nuclear weapons capability are unacceptable.

I support strong, diplomatic efforts that prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, and I believe that any future agreement must address not only Iran's nuclear program but also its ballistic missile development and sponsorship of terrorism. Iran's funding of proxy forces are recognized widely by partners in the region as destabilizing and harming the advancement of a prosperous, peaceful Middle East. The stakes are too high to tolerate halfway measures.

Iran cannot possess the capacity to enrich weapons grade uranium. Maximum sanctions and economic pressures should be utilized to bring them to the table to fully abandon this program. If Iran reaches nuclear breakout or intelligence reveals that they intend to share the material and knowledge with terror groups, I support military action as a last resort. Further, Iran has demonstrated that even their desire for a civilian nuclear program is too risky. Maximum inspections must be permitted to occur, and dismantlement of this sector should be our goal. If violations occur immediate consequences must be enacted.

The United States is strongest when we pursue robust diplomatic solutions, and I believe the same is true for Israel. The Abraham Accords demonstrate the potential for stability in the region and isolation of Iran. The more that countries like the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan strengthen their ties to Israel, the greater the potential for crucial Middle East partners like Saudi Arabia will be to create a lasting bloc of countries that seek peace and prosperity with Israel and push back against Iranian influence. When elected to Congress, I look forward to championing the Abraham Accords and pushing other countries to join.

## **Combating Antisemitism at Home and Abroad**

There is a troubling surge in antisemitism, both in the United States and around the world. From physical assaults to vandalism to online hate, antisemitism is a grave and worsening issue. According to the ADL, antisemitic incidents tripled after the October 7th attacks, underscoring the need to act with renewed urgency.

Universities across the country and many other institutions have systemic antisemitism issues that must be addressed. Far beyond criticism of Israeli government policy, anti-Jewish narratives and rhetoric are being normalized in ways that are deeply worrisome.

We must confront these challenges head on. Antisemitism fundamentally erodes democracy and pluralism. That's why it's critical members of Congress be ready to stand up and push back on antisemitism wherever it is present, even when it is politically inconvenient.

Beyond our borders, I support strong diplomatic and educational initiatives to combat antisemitism in international forums. Holocaust denial, distortion, and minimization must never be tolerated in the UN, on college campuses, or in the halls of Congress. As a mother, I've watched with increasing alarm as individuals, including children, are consuming antisemitic propaganda on social media. This is resulting in fear of safety for students on the college campus and the school playground.

## **Rejecting the BDS Movement**

The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement seeks to delegitimize Israel's right to exist. BDS does not promote peace—it undermines it by encouraging economic warfare and the isolation of the Jewish people and state of Israel in academics, culture and society at large. The movement does not seek a two-state solution; instead, it vilifies one side while ignoring the role of terror organizations like Hamas.

In Illinois, I supported our state's first-in-the-nation 2015 law opposing BDS by prohibiting state investment in companies that boycott Israel. This is about ensuring that taxpayer dollars do not fuel antisemitism and that our state stands in solidarity with our democratic allies.

## **Promoting Peace: A Two-State Solution**

I stand with Israel and support its rights of existence, stability, self-defense, and peace, and will advocate for a negotiated two-state solution among Israelis and Palestinians.

I believe in a future where Israelis and Palestinians can live side-by-side in peace, dignity, and mutual recognition. A two-state solution that ensures Israel's security and offers Palestinians a sovereign and viable state remains the most realistic and just path forward. But peace cannot be one-sided or built on equivocation.

I support a demilitarized Palestinian state next door to Israel without citizens of either state living under the threat of terror or violence.

When Israel declares victory over Hamas, leaders from both sides need to resume peace talks and work towards achieving the two-state solution. The leaders of the Palestinian people must come to the table with Israel for direct talks which will allow both sides to continue negotiating in full faith.

### **Moral Leadership in a Time of Hate**

In this moment of rising hate and eroding democratic norms worldwide, we cannot afford to equivocate. The safety of the Jewish people, the strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship, and the promise of a peaceful Middle East are all interwoven. To defend one is to defend them all. Whether it's speaking out after violence perpetrated against Jewish people, standing up in the face of political pressure to manipulate public policy, or even just pushing back on the flood of disinformation in the modern media, I will continue to be on the front lines. Silence in the face of antisemitism is complicity.

### **Conclusion**

It is essential that the United States Congress supports Israel's safety and security and the safety of the Jewish people. I am steadfast in my commitment to advocate for policies that reinforce Israel's right to exist as a Jewish and Democratic state, enhance regional stability, and counter the threats posed by Hamas, Iran, and others.

I will always stand with the people of Israel and with Jewish communities in Illinois and around the world. It is not only the way I was raised, but it is also how I raised my own family. It is part of the community I call home and the people I represent. In Congress, I will continue to uphold my Jewish values and support my community, while being a voice for understanding and empathy for all peace-loving citizens of the world.

The Jewish people have continually faced and overcome adversity. Perseverance, faith, and commitment are at our core. This was on full display when my husband and I visited Auschwitz. We were at our lowest point on this emotional journey, when a group of students, draped in Israeli flags walked through the gate, singing HaTikvah - a sign to us that we are survivors, and there are better days ahead.

JEWISHINSIDER