

## THE WEEKLY PRINT

*Josh Shapiro supports U.S. aid to Israel, but calls to use it as leverage • The hidden tax: How a strong shekel is quietly defunding Israel's social safety net • Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo won't rule out 2028 run • John Fetterman blasts party for tolerating antisemitism within its ranks • Jewish Dems vow to keep fighting in Michigan, even as they question if they belong • UCLA student government condemned Hillel event featuring former hostage Omer Shem Tov • Craigslist founder Craig Newmark: 'Good philanthropy never goes out of style'*

APRIL 23, 2026

## Josh Shapiro supports U.S. aid to Israel, but calls to use it as leverage

*In an interview with JI, Shapiro said he [hasn't] really thought about' whether he would appear on Hasan Piker's stream but that he hasn't been invited*

By Gabby Deutch

PITTSBURGH — On the eve of the NFL Draft on Wednesday, Pittsburgh, the host city, was in full spectacle mode. Israel, 6,000 miles away, was abuzz for a very different reason: the country was celebrating Yom HaAtzmaut, marking 78 years of independence.

As he jumped between draft events, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro shared his thoughts about both.

"I think we're here to celebrate an iconic event in sports and sports in general. Sports has the power to bring people together, and we need more of that in our society," Shapiro told *Jewish Insider* in an interview following a "unity dinner" in Pittsburgh that brought together 100 Black and Jewish students from local universities.

At the event — organized by New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft's Blue Square Alliance Against Hate, in partnership with Hillel International, the United Negro College Fund, the NFL and the Pittsburgh Steelers — Shapiro appeared on a panel with Kraft and retired Steelers quarterback Charlie Batch. NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell stopped by to introduce the event.

"The fact that the commissioner and Robert decided to dedicate a portion of draft week to finding ways to come together to a unity dinner, I felt that it was not just something I should do, but a responsibility of mine," said Shapiro.

Asked about Yom HaAtzmaut, Israel's independence day, Shapiro expressed affection for Israel. He also called for America to do more to rein in its government.

"I've always been really clear that I have a love for Israel, even while I have real concern about the leadership of Israel," said Shapiro.

A growing number of progressive lawmakers have in recent weeks called for an end to U.S. aid to Israel, including funding for Israel's Iron Dome missile-defense system, a position adopted by the progressive Israel advocacy group J Street. Shapiro declined to endorse that position.

"In the case of Israel, you have a country that is constantly being attacked with missiles and other weapons that put civilians at risk, and America is invested in providing assistance like Iron Dome to protect innocent civilians from those terrorist attacks," said Shapiro. "I think that is in America's national security interest."

But he did argue that the U.S. should use its position as a major financial backer of Israel to exert leverage over the country's use of American-made weapons. Shapiro said Washington has not done a good enough job of that.

"I would say that our last two presidents, President [Joe] Biden and now President [Donald] Trump, have failed to use the leverage of an American president to force Israel's hands to use that military aid in ways that comport with our American values, to limit the loss of innocent lives as the key factor there," said Shapiro. "I think what we need to examine is the rubber stamp that Donald Trump has been to the Netanyahu government."

Shapiro noted that more than 100 countries receive some form of military assistance from the U.S., a figure that includes nations who may not receive funding but who instead partner with the U.S. military for training or purchase U.S. weaponry.

"In any one of those 100 countries comes leverage for an American president to exercise to ensure that the military assistance we provide to that country is being used in accordance with our values, our American values," said Shapiro. "What we need is an American president who's going to use the

leverage that we have when we provide that kind of assistance to Israel or any one of the other 90-plus countries.”

In recent months, as Shapiro eyes a 2028 presidential bid, he has appeared on several popular podcasts, including “Pod Save America,” “Higher Learning” from digital media company The Ringer and the “All-In Podcast.” As one of the most vocally Jewish politicians in the country, Shapiro is almost always asked about his views on Israel.

“Every day I do, of course, get asked about Israel and the Middle East, and I think it’s important to just speak truthfully about how I feel,” said Shapiro. “I think it’s

important to be true to who you are, to not put your finger in the wind and just sort of follow which way it’s blowing.”

One show he has not appeared on? The Twitch stream hosted by Hasan Piker, a far-left commentator with a history of anti-semitic and anti-American views who has hosted conversations with several progressive lawmakers. California Gov. Gavin Newsom, another potential 2028 contender, has said he would sit for an interview with Piker.

Piker has generated a great deal of controversy among Democrats in recent weeks

after he appeared at two campaign rallies with Michigan Democratic Senate candidate Abdul El-Sayed this month. Those events prompted sharp criticism from several Michigan Democrats, including Sen. Elissa Slotkin (D-MI) and El-Sayed’s primary opponents, Rep. Haley Stevens (D-MI) and state Sen. Mallory McMorrow.

Shapiro opted not to weigh in. Asked if he would appear on Piker’s stream, he murmured.

“I haven’t been invited,” said Shapiro. “I haven’t really thought about it.” ♦

APRIL 20, 2026

## The hidden tax: How a strong shekel is quietly defunding Israel’s social safety net

*A strong Israeli shekel — hovering at a 3:1 exchange rate to the dollar — is forcing Israeli nonprofits to raise more foreign funds just to maintain the same level of operations, as the war requires them to do even more*

By Justin Hayet

*The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.*

As Israeli nonprofits struggle to address the country’s urgent needs following yet another war and as the government devotes more resources to national defense and less to the social safety net, many are finding themselves squeezed not only by the challenges of the security and budgetary situations but by a new financial foe: a strong shekel.

For many Israeli organizations, support from foreign donors — particularly American Jewish ones — is critical to their operations. For many organizations, fundraising trips to the States are not a luxury but a necessity. But now, as the shekel is gaining strength against the dollar, those fundraising efforts are not going nearly as far. This currency crunch also comes as many donors are feeling the pain of nearly three years of intense giving through terror attacks, wars and ceasefires.

“As the shekel strengthens, every dollar raised in the U.S. translates into less impact

on the ground in Israel,” said David Metzler, director of international relations at the IDF Widows & Orphans Organization.

The Israeli nonprofit sector is navigating a severe fiscal contraction caused by a perfect storm of currency shifts. With the NIS/USD exchange rate plummeting to 2.96 this past Friday, after weeks of hovering above 3.00, the sector is facing a nearly 19% drop from the 3.68 shekels-to-the-dollar level seen just one year ago.

Metzler noted that the shift requires a total rethink of how costs are presented to partners. “In the past, we would fundraise in the donor’s currency. Today, we lead with the actual cost in new Israeli shekels. That helps anchor expectations in the real cost of delivering programs in Israel, rather than a moving target tied to currency markets.”

This strengthening of the shekel — driven by what some are calling a “ceasefire dividend,” surging tech exports and foreign investment — acts as a hidden tax for the overwhelming majority of Israeli nonprofits that fundraise in dollars. This currency shift has effectively gutted the sector’s purchas-

ing power by nearly a fifth while domestic costs remain high.

This fiscal squeeze is compounded by intense internal pressures. With the government prioritizing a 5.1% deficit target to fund massive reconstruction and a record NIS 143 billion (\$47.6 billion) defense budget, public funding for social services is often stagnating or decreasing. Simultaneously, an aggressive private-sector labor market is driving up the cost of retaining talent, leaving mid-sized nonprofits trapped between a shrinking dollar and rising operational costs.

This gap is more than just an accounting headache; it is a threat to the sector’s workforce both in quality and quantity. Israel’s so-called “third sector” accounts for roughly 14% of its labor market. However, nonprofits are losing the talent wars as they struggle to compete with a private sector that is growing aggressively. As nonprofit funding is largely tied to a depreciating dollar, organizations cannot raise salaries to match corporate benchmarks, threatening to create a slow but steady “brain drain”

from the social sector into the business world.

One potential antidote to this dollar-dependency is a more aggressive focus on domestic Israeli corporate giving — a strategy that centers on building a shekel-based operational floor. Joseph Gitler, founder and chairman of Leket Israel, has long been a proponent of weaving the nonprofit mission into Israel's corporate fabric.

"We are all feeling the pain whether in dollars, euros or Canadian dollars," Gitler told eJP.

"This is why we spent time building our fundraising capacity in Israel. Our shekel donors have become even more vital," he said. "It's a wake-up call that everyone has to be diversified and put in the effort in Israel as well. We can't just count on overseas support, even if it's growing."

Gitler noted that this local strategy requires understanding the macroeconomic realities of Israeli businesses as well. "Our corporate partners donate in shekels, but depending on their business, their expenses could also be in shekels while their revenues are in dollars," he said.

Despite the growing financial challenges facing Israeli civil society, many nonprofit leaders are loath to speak up publicly. Many CEOs and development professionals who spoke with eJP were reluctant to address the "dollar gap" on the record out of concern that they would be perceived as ungrateful for the generosity that their foreign donors have shown them, particularly since the Oct. 7 terror attacks.

In an era of donor fatigue, many nonprofit leaders worry that explaining the cur-

rency shortfall will be misinterpreted as simply "asking for more," rather than a transparent report on the eroding value of existing gifts.

If the economic environment has fundamentally shifted, the way foundations and strategic donors support their partners must shift as well, according to Maya Natan, CEO of Keshet, the Israeli donor-advised fund.

To navigate this volatility, Natan advises a shift in how grants are structured. "Funders should not discard at least a 10% line for unforeseen costs in an organization's budget, because this allows the flexibility needed in order to not be surprised by changes in the financial landscape," she said.

Natan added that the current environment underscores the critical need for formalized grant agreements, making it clear how much is being provided in what currency. Unless the pledge is explicitly made in shekels, she warned, "funders giving more than \$100,000 must have formalized agreements to avoid issues and misalignments with grantees in the future."

The crisis is further compounded for organizations that rely on government partnerships, according to Lawrence Kasmir, deputy development director at the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel.

"A lot of nonprofits get government funds through tenders that require a match," Kasmir said. "If we are getting less money because of the exchange rate, we have less money to commit to that match, and then the funds aren't unlocked. We are losing our leverage."

The irony of a strong currency hurting the country's civil society is not lost on leading Israeli economists. In a recent interview with the Israeli financial newspaper *Globes*, Leo Leiderman, chief economic advisor to Israel's Bank Hapoalim, noted that the current currency pressures may only be the beginning.

Assessing the potential for regional stability and a "ceasefire dividend," Leiderman projected: "Such a situation would lead to a massive flow of capital to Israel, a sharp drop in Israel's risk premium, economic growth in the region and investment at historically high levels."

For the third sector, this success triggers a localized "Dutch Disease" — in which one flourishing export sector wreaks havoc on the rest of the economy. In Israel, tech exports can make it increasingly difficult for dollar-dependent nonprofits to deliver services.

According to Kasmir, the social sector has reached a breaking point, where a \$3 billion global funding pool is now worth over NIS 2 billion (\$670 million) less than it was just two years ago. This, he said, is putting more "pressure on the nonprofit 'Hunger Games,' as we all are competing for a piece of the same pie."

And yet, Kasmir said that he believes this moment calls for doubling down on donor transparency and, at times, organizational vulnerability. "We need to remain focused on the impact of the gift, and there is no easy answer for this, other than viewing our donors as partners in our work," he said. "We need to be honest with our partners about the implications of the strengthening of the shekel." ♦

APRIL 22, 2026

# Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo won't rule out 2028 run

*Trump's former top diplomat sat down with JI to discuss the U.S. war in Iran, backsliding support for Israel among young Americans, and how he's looking at the midterms*

By Emily Jacobs

**F**ormer Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is keeping the door open to a possible 2028 presidential run, saying “only the good Lord knows” what comes next as he continues to reestablish himself in the private sector and policy world after serving in the first Trump administration.

In a wide-ranging interview with *Jewish Insider*, Pompeo emphasized that there will be a “donnybrook” of competing visions for both parties in the next election cycle, and urged candidates to focus on “important issues” rather than online theatrics. He also praised Columbia University, where he now teaches at the School of International and Public Affairs, for “beg[inning] to get back the correct leadership ... in a way where more voices can be heard.”

The conversation came one day after Pompeo made a brief visit to the State Department for a private ceremony unveiling his official portrait. The gathering included an appearance by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who delivered remarks to the crowd on his predecessor's tenure as the chief U.S. diplomat.

This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

**Jewish Insider:** *What's your message to the current Iranian leadership if you were traveling to Islamabad, Pakistan, on behalf of President Trump to negotiate an end to the war in Iran?*

**Mike Pompeo:** My message would be that you've lost. You've lost the people of your country, who no longer want you to lead. You've lost the capacity to project terror around the world. You're about to lose any capability to use nuclear weapons to continue to blackmail the world. The Strait [of Hormuz] is going to be reopened. You're going to miss payroll in just a few weeks, because you're not going to be able to ship product and receive currency that is usable

in foreign exchange, and people will stop doing their jobs.

You miss payroll enough times and all of a sudden, Hezbollah decides it's not as great a fighting force, or the Shia militias, or the knuckleheads in Yemen, the Houthis. They've all become hooked on Iranian money.

There is a solution that is different to that. It'll mean you're not in power. It will mean that you lose. It will mean that you personally lose power, but the other alternative is that you will be killed.

**JJ:** *Do you think that the president made the right decision by reentering negotiations with the Iranians when he did, or do you think there are targets he should have hit beforehand, for military or diplomatic leverage?*

**Pompeo:** I think the blockade is sufficient to merit another try. Look, I'm deeply skeptical. I'm not sure there is a decision maker in Iran today. I think there are multiple fractured decision making processes and lots of confusion.

I don't know that he needed to go after additional targets. The denial of their capacity to move product through the strait is a very significant impact on them, but I do think it's the case if, in fact, the Iranian regime cannot coherently present a resolution that will look and feel to them like surrender ... — because they're going to give up the entirety of their nuclear program, they're going to have to stop funding their proxy forces, their ballistic missile program is gone, their industrial base will have to be shut down and redirected towards commercial activity, not terror; that will feel like surrender to them — then I think the president will have to begin to go back at some of those industrial targets that continue to pose risk to Israeli and American servicemembers that are in the region, and more broadly, to

commercial activity that needs to move through the region as well.

**JJ:** *We're seeing a lot of reporting about various terms that the Trump administration has purportedly offered Iran in these talks, specifically when it comes to the enrichment of uranium. There have been reports suggesting the U.S. proposed a 20-year moratorium on Iran's enrichment program, while others allege a 10-year pause is being discussed. What do you make of these reported offers and, more broadly speaking, what would a good deal look like to you?*

**Pompeo:** Color me cynical, but having lived as a secretary of state for two and a half years, when I see that reporting — and I don't have first hand knowledge — I suspect that is someone playing games.

I put no credit in anything that I read in *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post*, only in the sense that they don't know or they heard from a single individual that wasn't actually representing the holistic view of the U.S. government. I spend no time thinking about those. I do spend a lot of time thinking about what “good” looks like. Good is infinity.

I'm also practical as someone who was a practitioner. I get it. You don't ever get forever, but you don't put external constraints on duration when it comes to something as serious as a regime that is in power with the capacity to inflict enormous harm on the world, with a conventional force that is serious and a nuclear capability that is real.

There's two things. One, you can't pay them. That's what President Obama, then President Biden tried to do, send pallets of cash to buy your way out of this solution. The regime is not for sale. Second, I think it's also the case that you can't falsely give them hope that says, “You're going to be able to return to status quo in five years, 10 years, 20

years from now. I think it's the case that we've reached the moment where now this is a durational change in the nature of the regime.

Maybe some of the names will be the same, maybe the good spirit will move them and they will become a normal nation again. These are the things we hope and pray for as Jews and Christians, but we also do it with the knowledge that it is unlikely, and that means we have to change the leaders that are actually directing activities inside of the country.

**JJ:** *Do you think NATO has handled this moment and responded to President Trump deciding to take action in Iran well? The president is vocally frustrated with them and thinks they've been a thorn in the administration's side.*

**Pompeo:** We all know that you figure out exactly who's with you in times of stress. This is true in our personal lives. It's true in our professional lives. It's certainly true in sovereign interactions.

Putting aside NATO for the moment, the way some of the European nations have behaved is absolutely abhorrent. I get that they weren't brought in at the beginning and how that makes it complicated and it creates hurt feelings, but this isn't about feelings. This is about national sovereignty and the safety of their own citizens.

Whether it was Spain or another nation that wouldn't do so much as to be quiet and allow our aircraft to fly through their space, for someone who has been a staunch defender of NATO, because I believe deeply it has been important to the United States of America and to global security, to watch a leader of a country cozy up to China while the United States is doing its level best to save the very security for his own citizens is deeply indecent.

I hope there will come to be an understanding that America is indeed the good guy in this all throughout Europe and many nations in Europe, that's why I hesitate to broad brush NATO. Many nations in Europe have actually been great and have done their best with the tools that they have available. Others have chosen a path that is very different from that. I think that will be something that takes a long time to rebuild — the trust with those countries — and they'll have to demonstrate that they are worthy of partner-

ship with Israel or the United States or the West.

**JJ:** *Are you still facing death threats from Iran or has your standing with Tehran changed as a result of the war?*

**Pompeo:** As far as I know, they have not lifted the fatwa on me, so yes. We still do our level best to have adequate security to keep me from being killed by the Iranians, who have repeatedly said that they would like to see me go away.

**JJ:** *How would you grade Israel as an ally, both historically and in the last few years in the post-Oct. 7, 2023, landscape?*

**Pompeo:** First, the United States and Israel have sovereignty, they're independent of each other, and a different set of priorities and a different set of understandings on particular matters, very full stop. Second, they are the most fundamentally important ally and a great partner and enormous friends and important to the United States in so many deep ways.

As a Christian, this matters to me, but more importantly as a security matter, I had no better partner than the Israeli intelligence services when I was CIA director and Prime Minister Netanyahu and the foreign policy and security team inside of Israel when I was secretary of state. They did so many things to help America, often when it was difficult and much more in our interest than theirs.

That doesn't mean we're not going to have knock down, drag out fights over certain things. I'm sure that's going to be true. We'll have different target priorities, and that's normal. It would be odd if you didn't find that, but boy, I don't know that the United States has ever had a closer military and security relationship than today between the United States and Israel, and I think the Iranians found that out the hard way.

They saw us flying together. They saw us intelligence sharing together. They saw the hard work that is the logistical tail that sits behind all of this. It doesn't get much glory, but you've got to move a lot of ammo, a lot of fuel, a lot of people, a lot of stuff. We did that alongside Israel, and it would have been very difficult for either of us to have achieved what's been achieved today without the other.

**JJ:** *With that in mind, we're seeing a real shift in attitude, especially with young people, both in the Democratic and Republican parties on supporting Israel. What's your reaction to this*

*and what do you think was the catalyst for this change? Do you attribute it to negative feelings about the war on terror in the 2000s? What role do you think antisemitic figures in the podcast space play?*

**Pompeo:** The causation is so difficult to identify. I think probably each of those has some element of impact and shaping. Israel has always been a flashpoint because of the conflict between Israel and the terrorists, but it's been framed as a Palestinian-Israeli conflict, with Israel pitched to most of the world as the bad guy in that. My judgment is nothing could be further from the truth.

Israel has simply wanted to live as a sovereign, independent nation. It's made many offers. The Palestinian Authority rejected them for decades. I think that has worn on a certain piece of the intelligentsia, the American left and some pockets on the right for sure. Some of it's rooted in antisemitism, almost certainly. Some of it's rooted in that it's popular. It's cool on a campus because the faculty is all talking about the genocidal horrors inflicted by Israel, which, I mean, it's just patently false. I think each of those things contribute to it.

My prayer and my hope is, and I think this will prove to be true, that in the end, decent people who are part of Western civilization can identify evil from good, and will see the difference between the two. They may not like a particular strike that the United States takes somewhere where innocent civilians are killed — it's true, as collateral [damage], it happens — but they will be able to see the difference between genocidal intent, that is driven by the Iranian regime around the world, and a desire for peace, which is driven by nations like the United States and Israel.

That means those of us who see it that way have a duty to try and articulate it, to explain it, to be relentless in articulating why that's true, not to call people names, not to mock them, but rather to make the arguments, to use reason to convince them of reality and of the truth about what's really taking place there. I pray one day that the bad guys will lay down their weapons, because the moment they do, the reality will be before us all. There will be peace.

**JJ:** *Staying on politics, there's a lot of trepidation from Republicans on Capitol Hill about*

*how the November midterms are going to play out. Do you share that concern?*

**Pompeo:** Having served in Congress, having been elected four times, I'm always mindful that this conversation isn't that important. What's really important is that you work your tail off, and you, the candidates, have the first responsibility, and the rest of us try our best to help them.

It is the case, I think, that there's a lot of energy in the progressive movement on the left today. I think that energy is there that sometimes has been more on our side. When I got elected in 2010, we had 74 brand new Republicans in districts we hadn't won in years and years, so there was more energy. I think the next six months require us to go build that energy. If we build that energy, I think we'll do better than the mean.

These midterms are always tough for the party that's in control. No reason to think that historical change will take place, but if you work hard and tell a story properly, which is that these conservative ideas will deliver better outcomes for America, then we'll do better than I think some of the fearmongers are predicting.

**JJ:** *Do you worry about the situation in the Middle East hurting Republicans in November?*

**Pompeo:** You've seen that already. You've seen Sen. [Chris] Murphy (D-CT) do this. You've seen Sen. [Bernie] Sanders (I-VT) do this. They're already trying to say: 'This was a war of choice. President Trump failed. This is a disaster. Look how expensive gasoline is.' So yes, this will be part of the political conversation, but that just means you have to go and articulate the why of this.

I know how people are struggling, and I feel bad when I see gas prices high for everybody too, especially the least amongst us, but I'd remind them we just have lived in this false state for so long where we thought we could just ignore this problem when it had to be solved. If the price of that, of solving that and keeping Americans for decades to come from Iran with a nuclear weapon, then to pay a little bit more at the gas pump for a little while is an acceptable cost, in my view.

I think most Americans actually get that, and they just need to understand the why and the how. When explained, I think they'll come to the same conclusion I do, that this was a noble and important decision that President Trump made, and that it is, in the long run, better for them and their children and their grandchildren. We [Republicans] shouldn't play politics with it either, because this is about national security, but we should articulate the rationale for why this is the best outcome for every American, Democrat and Republican alike.

**JJ:** *How are you looking at the 2028 Republican presidential bench? Do you see yourself being a part of that race?*

**Pompeo:** It's gonna be a donnybrook on both sides. I think there will be lots of candidates who present themselves, and I love that. As for what comes for the Pompeo family next, only the good Lord knows. We'll see. I have a brand new grandson, I'm loving life, but we'll see.

But I will say something that I do think is really important about the 2028 election. I hope it's fought over important issues in a rational way. I hope the progressives show up and make their best arguments to the American people, and that the center-left and center-right do the same, and the MAGA folks and the right wing, just everybody don't do memes, don't tell fibs, don't think, 'Gosh, I was really good. I owned a lib on X.' That might bring a sugar high, but what it doesn't do is really deliver for the American people. I hope the campaign will turn out to be about things that really matter and be discussed in a serious way, and if so, I always have confidence the American people will get it right.

**JJ:** *What are the next steps for you in your career?*

**Pompeo:** I'm back in the business world. It's what I did for most of my life, before I ran for Congress. I'm involved with a private equity firm. I'm helping a couple other businesses as a board member, back in the capitalist mode, and that's great because there's lots of risk but lots of joy. ... I'm keeping my hand in the policy space too. I teach at Columbia Uni-

versity and at Liberty University, two very different institutions, and I love them both, each in their own way. Then I'm trying to help some candidates be successful in these midterm elections as well.

**JJ:** *We've covered Columbia closely at JJ since Oct. 7, and it's notable for them to have a voice like yours join their faculty. On that front, what's your take on the lack of campus protests or encampments against the Iranian regime? We're not seeing the same type of protests we saw against Israel taking place against Iran.*

**Pompeo:** It's a great question. It got out of control because of failed leadership. The institution's leaders failed those students. They didn't keep the students safe. They didn't set the correct boundaries.

We all want to protect First Amendment freedoms. That's what college is about. Knock yourself out. You can say crazy stuff, but you can't threaten and you can't put other students at risk, and you can't blockade classrooms so the students can't enter. That's just functionally terrible leadership.

I think what you're seeing is some of these institutions have begun to get back the correct leadership, and I think they've actually done it in a way where more voices can be heard.

I was at another liberal campus a few weeks back, and some of the conservative students were still saying to me that they felt like it was still difficult to speak up in class, and that the faculty was, they didn't use the word oppressive, but they felt the faculty was difficult. I hope that veil will be lifted, and I hope those students and all students that have different views will all feel comfortable saying, 'Here's what I think, and here's why I think that.' Then somebody will challenge them and say, 'Well, have you thought about X or Y, or 'I see it differently.' That's what these institutions are all about. It's what Columbia was when it was at its finest. That's what Harvard and Dartmouth and Liberty all should aspire to. ♦

APRIL 18, 2026

# John Fetterman blasts party for tolerating antisemitism within its ranks

*'The guy that's going to win the primary in Maine has a Nazi tattoo on his chest and now that's no problem for a lot of voters. ... That's crazy,' Fetterman told CNN*

By Emily Jacobs

Sen. John Fetterman (D-PA) said on Friday that the Democratic Party “absolutely” has an issue with rising antisemitism, calling out the party’s embrace of candidates including Graham Platner in Maine and Abdul El-Sayed in Michigan while criticizing the recent progressive push to cut off defensive aid to Israel.

The Pennsylvania senator made the comments after being asked on CNN’s “The Arena with Kasie Hunt” if he believed the Democratic Party has a problem with antisemitism. Fetterman argued that the growing support for both candidates in their respective primaries was indicative of a tolerance for antisemitism within the party.

He pointed to Platner surviving the controversy surrounding his Nazi tattoo and *Jewish Insider’s* reporting in recent days that the first-time candidate repeatedly praised Hamas’ tactics in a 2014 Reddit forum that shared video of the terrorist group killing several Israeli soldiers.

“I mean, the guy that’s going to win the primary in Maine has a Nazi tattoo on his chest and now that’s no problem for a lot of voters,” Fetterman said. “I don’t know why. That’s crazy. And now, I mean, we know he knows, he knew what that was. I mean, if you’re back over 12, 13 years, cheering about the death of Israeli soldiers, I mean, you clearly have a serious issue, and the left has a serious issue with antisemitism.”

“It was just released that he was praising and celebrating a video online where Hamas was beating and torturing Israeli soldiers to death,” Fetterman said, referring to Platner.

Fetterman also made note of El-Sayed’s lead in one recent primary poll despite his decision to campaign alongside antisemitic streamer Hasan Piker.

“The guy in Michigan, he’s leading now in that race, as my party becomes more and more hostile to Israel,” Fetterman said. “They’re just palling around someone like Hasan Piker, you know the guy that, absolutely, I mean, he absolutely is proud to cheer for Hamas, loves Hamas.”

“The Democrats are proud to stand with him and campaign with him,” he added. “Go ahead, try to win Pennsylvania and campaign around Hasan Piker, or saying, ‘Yeah, America deserved 9/11’ or ‘Hamas is 1,000% better than Israel’ or ‘I don’t care about the rapes and for all this other things.’ We have a serious problem with my party.”

Fetterman, one of most vocal pro-Israel Democrats in the Senate, told Hunt that Israel is “becoming more and more toxic for a Democrat to support,” pointing out that “80% of Democrats view Israel in a negative way.” He specifically condemned the uptick in progressive and far-left voices coming out against continued defensive aid to Israel.

“You have people like [Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez] voting against Iron Dome, the technology that prevents tens and tens of [thousands] of Israeli deaths from the rockets that those cowards fire at civilians,” he said.

Fetterman went on to criticize members of his party for opposing the war in Iran, saying that there were other Democrats who felt the same as him in supporting the effort but were not speaking out because doing so would be “politically toxic.”

“Every single Democrat has already been on record saying, ‘We can’t ever allow Iran to acquire a nuclear bomb,’” Fetterman said, specifically naming former Vice President Kamala Harris and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and “everyone that’s run for president” who said “we can’t ever allow that to happen.”

“Then, [President Donald] Trump happened to do something about that to prevent that. That’s why I support that,” he continued. “I’m not the only Democrat who supports this, but I’m the only Democrat that’s willing to stand up and say it’s the right thing because I know how politically toxic it is as a Democrat to support this.”

Fetterman surmised that he is the “only Democrat ... perhaps left in the entire Congress” who will say publicly that recent U.S. military action in Iran “was necessary” because doing so “contradicts every single thing that every Democrat has said” about how “we can’t ever allow Iran to acquire a nuclear bomb.”

Fetterman went on to criticize the Democratic lawmakers who voted for the recent war powers resolutions in the House and Senate, arguing that their opposition to the war has been “celebrated” by Iranian leadership and calling their response to the conflict “absurd.”

“Iran has celebrated this,” Fetterman said of the broad Democratic opposition. “A lot of people in my party and a lot of people in the media has turned Iran into the underdog. They’re like Rudy” — making a reference to the 1993 sports movie — “and putting them up on their shoulders and cheering for Iran at this point.”

Asked to respond to Sen. Elissa Slotkin’s (D-MI) statement that “being pro-Israel today is not about simply supporting the political or military agenda of Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu, just like being pro-American should not be equated with loyalty to President Trump,” Fetterman argued that her comments on her votes for Sen. Bernie Sanders’ (I-VT) measures on Thursday blocking military sales to Israel were similarly “absurd.”

“She’s a Democratic senator. Why aren’t you criticizing Iran? Why aren’t you criticiz-

ing Hamas or Hezbollah or these other kinds of forces? If you have to pick a side here, criticize that. So that's where we are as a Democratic Party, and you're going to vote against the kinds of critical aid that Israel requires and needs in order to beat back and destroy an organization like Hezbollah. Like I said, if you have to pick a side in a war, and clearly we have a side, I'm proud to stand on the side of Israel and America."

Pressed on if he was still committed to being a Democrat given that his comments

marked his harshest criticism yet of his party, Fetterman responded affirmatively.

"Well, of course. Yeah, I am absolutely committed to [remaining a] Democrat, absolutely," Fetterman said. "I vote 91, 92 percent the Democratic line, but I am the only Democrat now that's proud to consistently stand with Israel, and I'm going to do that, and that's been very damaging with my standing as a Democrat."

"If it's what's necessary, I'll be the last Democrat standing with Israel through this," he later added.

Fetterman also predicted that the war in Iran would not go on much longer, noting that "things kind of continue to wind down," and said it's "important to support" the U.S. securing an outcome in which Iranian leadership "surrenders."

"I think these are very positive developments," he said of Israel and the U.S. targeting Iran and their leading proxies.

"I think it seems like it's going to wind down," Fetterman said. "And we're heading to a strong end at this point." ♦

APRIL 22, 2026

## Jewish Dems vow to keep fighting in Michigan, even as they question if they belong

*Jewish Democrats described their statewide convention as 'shell-shocked,' with pro-Israel voices marginalized and shouted down*

By Gabby Deutch

When thousands of Michigan's most ardent Democratic activists gathered in Detroit on Sunday for the party's nominating convention, Decky Alexander was thrilled: 200 people were in the room for a Jewish Democratic Caucus meeting, more than double the 70 people who showed up last year in its first official gathering.

Candidates for statewide office, from the U.S. Senate to attorney general, came by to pitch voters as activists schmoozed over bagels.

"It was incredibly energizing and affirming. That's how the day began," Alexander, who chairs the caucus, told *Jewish Insider* in an interview on Tuesday. "It didn't end that way."

As the day went on, Jewish Democrats were alarmed to see pro-Israel voices within the party marginalized and shouted down.

"Our Jewish caucus brought a lot of people to the convention, and I was with many of those people who were first-time conventiongoers. They were — I would use the term shell-shocked," said Joan Lowenstein, a lawyer and former Ann Arbor city councilmember.

Rep. Haley Stevens (D-MI), a moderate and pro-Israel candidate for Senate, faced

loud, sustained boos when she spoke in front of the main convention room. One person spotted an attendee on Sunday wearing a shirt that said "Resistance until liberation," with an image showing someone wearing a keffiyeh throwing rocks.

The main reason that activists gathered that day was to vote to nominate candidates for a range of positions, including attorney general and secretary of state, distinct from other states where voters directly elect their party's primary nominees.

The outcome of one relatively low-level race generated the most headlines: delegates' decision to nominate Amir Makled, a Dearborn attorney with a history of social media posts praising Hezbollah, for a position on the University of Michigan Board of Regents. He unseated incumbent Jordan Acker, who is Jewish and was in part targeted due to his calls to discipline anti-Israel student protesters during the 2024 encampment at the Ann Arbor campus.

Acker told *The Detroit News* afterward that the level of antisemitism among Michigan Democrats is "extensive."

"The question we have to ask as Jews is whether we still belong here," said Acker, a Democrat.

The Democratic Party congratulated Makled in social media posts. What remains unclear is just how far party leaders will go to support Makled as he proceeds to the general election. Curtis Hertel, the chair of the Michigan Democratic Party, did not respond to a request for comment.

But Makled's nomination is cause for concern among many Jewish Democrats.

"I certainly cannot vote for somebody who praises Hezbollah and uplifts posts that use 'Jew' as a slur. This was an unacceptable nomination, and I simply cannot affiliate with somebody who harbors those views," Jeremy Moss, a state senator who is running for Congress in the Detroit suburbs, told *JJ* on Tuesday.

Rep. Kristen McDonald Rivet (D-MI), a moderate Democrat representing a swing district, who is not Jewish, on Tuesday described the scenes from the convention as "deeply troubling," and in particular criticized the party's nomination of Makled.

For Jewish Democrats who are not willing to disavow Israel, the question of what to do in a race like the Board of Regents is uncertain. Lowenstein, the Ann Arbor activist, said she would "never" support Makled, but that she also would not vote for a Republican.

“I think Jewish voters are now in a position where we have to look at each person, and not look at their party, but look at what they stand for,” she said.

**“I need to create the table, not just always be invited to the table. I just don’t know what that looks like,” said Decky Alexander, the Jewish caucus chair. “It’s a heartbreak. I felt, in moments, is this going to be a breakup? I don’t think so, but we’ve been feeling this way, a lot of us, for a long time.”**

The Jewish voters who attended the convention on Sunday are among the most committed Democrats in the state, which makes it more notable that some were left questioning their place in the party.

“They think that there’s shrinking room for them in spaces that claim to be inclusive,” said Elyssa Schmier, the Anti-Defamation League’s Michigan director. “That’s kind of the saying of the Democratic Party: ‘We have a big tent, big-tent politics.’ It did not feel that way at the convention.”

Even the activists most disillusioned by Sunday’s events acknowledge that the convention attendees are not necessarily representative of the state’s Democratic electorate. All it took to attend the convention was registering as a party member a month beforehand and paying a nominal fee.

“I don’t know that it was an accurate representation of where the broader Democratic electorate would be, say, in a primary,” said Moss. “But there’s no question, there was incivility at best [and] displays of Jewish antagonism at worst in the convention hall.”

Jewish activists hope this moment of upheaval can be a chance for Jewish Democrats to reassert their place in the party, even if things feel tenuous and difficult at present.

“I need to create the table, not just always be invited to the table. I just don’t know what that looks like,” said Alexander, the Jewish caucus chair. “It’s a heartbreak. I felt, in moments, is this going to be a breakup? I don’t think so, but we’ve been feeling this way, a lot of us, for a long time.”

Between now and the general election, Alexander wants to talk to as many candidates as possible about whether they plan to take the concerns of Jewish voters seriously.

**“I haven’t changed. I am not a Republican or a conservative. I cannot win my district as an independent. But I also wonder how I can continue to carry this party banner with anything approaching pride, or rather, without anxiety and ambivalence,” state Rep. Noah Arbit, a Democrat who represents West Bloomfield, told JI.**

“This isn’t identity politics. This is figuring out, in a pluralistic nation like the United

States, does everyone have a place? And we want the people who are running for office to answer: Do the Jews have a place in your vision and your platform?” she said.

Moss said he intends to use his platform as a state lawmaker and congressional candidate to answer that question clearly: Jews do have a place in the Democratic Party.

“My solution is to offer my candidacy for everybody and to ensure that folks know that there is a lane for Jewish Democrats in this moment, that we don’t have to feel hopeless, we don’t have to feel politically homeless, that this is a lane that we have to solidify here,” said Moss. “My core values as a Democrat are really Jewish values.”

For state Rep. Noah Arbit, a Democrat who represents West Bloomfield, the site of an antisemitic attack last month, Sunday’s convention adds to angst he has been feeling about his party for years. He was the one who founded the Jewish caucus in 2019, in response to rising antisemitism on the political left.

“I haven’t changed. I am not a Republican or a conservative. I cannot win my district as an independent. But I also wonder how I can continue to carry this party banner with anything approaching pride, or rather, without anxiety and ambivalence,” he told JI. Yet he said he will not cave to pressure from the party’s far-left flank.

“I certainly won’t be run out of representing my community by a band of extremists,” said Arbit. “So I need to stay.” ♦

APRIL 21, 2026

## UCLA student government condemned Hillel event featuring former hostage Omer Shem Tov

*Shem Tov was kidnapped by Hamas from the Nova Music Festival on Oct. 7, 2023, and held in Gaza for 505 days*

By Haley Cohen

UCLA’s student government condemned a recent campus event featuring former Israeli hostage Omer Shem Tov, labeling the speaker selection as “selective platforming of narratives that obscure the broader reality of ongoing state violence” and “a troubling disregard for Palestinian life.”

In an undated letter to UCLA administration, as well as the organizers of the event — UCLA Hillel and the UCLA Y&S Nazarian Center for Israel Studies — and “affiliated campus stakeholders,” the UCLA Undergraduate Students Association Council wrote that it “condemns” the April 14 event, held on Yom HaShoah, which was

titled “505 Days in Captivity: Omer Shem Tov’s Testimony of Resilience.”

The council represents over 29,000 undergraduates at UCLA.

“While we affirm the humanity of all people impacted by violence, we reject the selective platforming of narratives that obscure the broader reality of ongoing state

violence. Israel is currently continuing to carry out what has been widely identified by human rights advocates as a genocide in Gaza, while also expanding its illegal military campaign into Lebanon. In this context, elevating a single narrative, absent of critical political and humanitarian framing, serves to legitimize and normalize these ongoing atrocities,” the letter states.

“Institutional sponsorship of this event reflects a troubling disregard for Palestinian life ... Universities must not be complicit in the production or amplification of one-sided narratives that erase systems of oppression and occupation,” the letter continued. “USAC calls on UCLA to immediately reconsider its role in sponsoring future programming that advances incomplete and

harmful representations of ongoing violence.”

“Hillel at UCLA would like to apologize for absolutely nothing,” the group’s executive director, Daniel Gold, told *Jewish Insider*.

“Members of UCLA student government have once again shown they are anti-dialogue, anti-learning, anti-truth, anti-student, and anti-Jewish in condemning our beautiful event last week with Omer Shem Tov,” Gold said.

Shem Tov was kidnapped by Hamas from the Nova Music Festival on Oct. 7, 2023, and held captive in Gaza for 505 days.

A spokesperson for UCLA told JI, “The event’s message was one of resilience and respect for human rights and dignity — a message we support. We stand by UCLA

Hillel, UCLA Y&S Nazarian Center for Israel Studies and the UCLA Chapter of Students Supporting Israel’s invitation to have this very important dialogue.”

“We will review the process by which this letter was issued. The condemnation of such a peaceful event to share a story of resilience in the face of extreme suffering is antithetical to the values of our Bruin community,” the spokesperson said.

UCLA Chancellor Julio Frenk spoke at the event, introducing Shem Tov.

The federal government has been in a monthslong legal battle with UCLA, including a February lawsuit alleging that the campus failed to protect Jewish and Israeli faculty and staff in accordance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination. ♦

APRIL 23, 2026

## Craigslist founder Craig Newmark: ‘Good philanthropy never goes out of style’

*The accidental billionaire defends his support for the ADL, highlighting group’s intelligence gathering and counter-extremism work*

By Jay Deitcher

*The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.*

Craig Newmark, the founder of Craigslist, has a message for Jewish philanthropists:

“Everyone should help out to the extent they can,” he told *eJewishPhilanthropy*. “Some people are privileged. We got lucky by birth or business, and after we’re living well and helping our family live well, maybe it’s time to consider giving away the surplus.”

Like fellow New Jersey native Bruce Springsteen, Newmark came from humble beginnings. His father sold meat and insurance, and his mother was a bookkeeper; they met at a synagogue dance. His father died of cancer six months after Newmark’s bar mitzvah.

It was a pair of teachers at the Hebrew school he attended at the Morristown Jewish Center, Raphael and Rachel Levin, both

Holocaust survivors, who inspired the values that Newmark says he still lives by today. “On a deep gut level, [thinking of their memory reminds me] that there are times and places where Jews haven’t done very well, where they had to escape from a train on the way to a bad place,” he said.

An approachable philanthropist, who is passionate about supporting military families, fighting cyberattacks and rescuing pigeons, Newmark largely fell into his wealth: Craigslist started out as an email list for friends, became a bare-bones website and took off unexpectedly. He finds people’s interest in him both “surreal” and “funny,” he said, admitting “there’s a lot of stuff I don’t get.”

In 2020, Newmark was estimated to have a net worth of \$1.3 billion, but he claims to no longer be a billionaire: he’s given much of his wealth away, recently joining — and advocating for — the Giving

Pledge, where billionaires commit to giving half their wealth to charity.

Newmark spoke with eJP about what makes something Jewish philanthropy, admitting when he isn’t an expert on topics, when to give to specifically Jewish organizations and criticism of the Giving Pledge.

The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

**Jay Deitcher:** *Because many of your values were shaped by the Levins at Sunday school, does that make your philanthropy inherently Jewish, and what does that mean to you?*

**Craig Newmark:** They basically set my moral compass, which is how I approach everything. I’m working on stuff I’ve always had difficulty understanding, like brother’s keeper, sister’s keeper. How literally do I take that? I think [these morals are] more broadly Judeo-Christian, because Jesus said something about selling one’s stuff and

feeding the poor. What does that mean exactly? I don't know, but I have a feeling I'm missing something. But I always feel like I'm missing something. I wish that was a joke.

**JD:** *You said in your recent New York Times opinion piece that "Making money isn't proof to me that I know something any better than someone else." You were just talking about not fully grasping everything, but you have this power as a philanthropist to make decisions that impact others. How do you weigh that knowledge, knowing that because you have this money, you are making decisions that are impacting people who don't have the power to make these decisions?*

**CN:** I get a lot of help. Any success I've had is [because of] the networks of networks of people. I am on a nearly continuous basis talking to people who are smarter than I am and who are better in a number of areas where I'm lacking. I have to rely on the intuition and emotional intelligence of other people. I make the best decision I can do in good faith, and then question my decisions at a later time.

**JD:** *Who are some of these people who help you?*

**CN:** The best two examples are Blue Star Families for military families, and that's [CEO] Kathy Roth-Douquet, and for veterans, that's Anne Marie Dougherty [CEO of the Bob Woodruff Foundation]. When it comes to cybersecurity and fighting scams, I rely on the Aspen Institute in Washington on a near-daily basis.

**JD:** *The Chronicle of Philanthropy said you have a "bare-bones philanthropic infrastructure." You outsource for accounting, legal and communications, and are one of the philanthropists who is the easiest to access. You replied to my email within minutes. Why take such a hands-on route?*

**CN:** The deal is that I have no employees. I do have people who help me. I don't have a spin doctor hovering over everything I say; I filter myself. The best part of that is that I now have some idea of where I'm smart and

where I'm stupid, and I do my best to avoid the stupid areas.

**JD:** *You've given to a number of Jewish initiatives. You've given to The Forward, the Anti-Defamation League, your local Chabad and supported a lot of Leonard Cohen-related initiatives. You helped to restore a Torah at the Morristown Jewish Center. Often in the philanthropic world, we talk about balancing focusing on the particular, which is initiatives based around the Jewish people, and the universal, or obligations to the entire world. How do you weigh that in your own philanthropy?*

**CN:** I just do what makes most sense. I have some small bias towards specifically Jewish initiatives. As you noticed with the ADL, they do good work in threat intelligence gathering regarding threats to the Jewish community in the U.S.

I also support other groups that support traditional Jewish values, like I support 92NY. I think it's Jon Stewart [who] said [it's] a tie for the second holiest place in Judaism, along with Zabar's, although I kind of prefer Russ & Daughters. [Editor's note: Stewart ranked Zabar's before 92NY in holiness. Russ & Daughters did not make Stewart's list.]

I support the Jewish Community Relations Council in New York, and the [Secure Community] Network in Chicago. They're doing good work. I don't talk about them a lot because anyone doing threat intelligence gathering that protects us is at serious risk, and I don't want to get them targeted.

**JD:** *The ADL has come under fire a lot the last two years from both sides of the political spectrum, where some on the left are frustrated feeling that the organization conflates criticism of Israel with antisemitism, and some on the right have been upset about the organization's labeling of Christian nationalism as extremism. Bret Stephens has called for the dismantling of the organization. You're an interesting person to speak with, because you are on the tech advisory board and probably see what a lot of people don't*

*see. Why is ADL still an important initiative to support?*

**CN:** Right now, they're getting a lot of crap from different people. I'm not qualified to address that because being smart about it requires social skills. I try to avoid areas where I'm largely ignorant.

But I can see they do good counter-extremism work. They do it quietly, and I'm very aware whenever you're dealing with anything involving intelligence gathering or law enforcement... they appreciate it when I keep my mouth shut. Sometimes it is really good when a tech success story guy keeps his mouth shut.

**JD:** *At a time when it's become increasingly unfashionable to be affiliated with the Giving Pledge, you joined last year. Why was that the time?*

**CN:** I don't think it's unfashionable. It's just that there are people who don't believe in it, and they're newsworthy, so what they're saying got attention. Good philanthropy never goes out of style. We need to be louder about it.

**JD:** *Why was last year the time to join?*

**CN:** Somebody brought up the subject with me, and I started thinking about it more, and I realized that it might do some good for me to speak up, and it might be funny.

**JD:** *Why is it funny?*

**CN:** That kind of thing is something I think is surreal, and I find my doing something surreal kind of entertaining. No one else may, but sometimes it's enough to just amuse yourself.

**JD:** *What do billionaires and millionaires owe society?*

**CN:** I think they only owe what their value systems and religious background suggest that they do. All I really understand is the whole Judeo-Christian thing, which says, "You do well for yourself and your family, and then maybe you help out where you can." So I'm not judging anyone, but I will remind people that the Bible is relatively clear on this subject. ♦