



## BARACK OBAMA: A STRONG RECORD OF SUPPORTING THE SECURITY, PEACE, AND PROSPERITY OF ISRAEL

*"Our job is to renew the United States' efforts to help Israel achieve peace with its neighbors while remaining vigilant against those who do not share this vision. . . . That effort begins with a clear and strong commitment to the security of Israel: our strongest ally in the region and its only established democracy. **That will always be my starting point.** And when we see all of the growing threats in the region: from Iran to Iraq to the resurgence of al-Qaeda to the reinvigoration of Hamas and Hezbollah, that loyalty and that friendship will guide me as we begin to lay the stones that will build the road that takes us from the current instability to lasting peace and security."*

[Speech at AIPAC Policy Forum in Chicago, 3/2/07]

### BARACK OBAMA'S PLAN TO STRENGTHEN THE U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Barack Obama has established a strong record as a true friend of Israel, a stalwart defender of Israel's security, and an effective advocate of strengthening the steadfast U.S.-Israel relationship. He believes that Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state should never be challenged. As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Obama has consistently emphasized his commitment to our ally Israel, and has been an active supporter of legislation helping to ensure the support and security of the Middle East's only established democracy. Obama continually works with a number of his colleagues in the Senate to promote a closer relationship between the U.S. and Israel on a range of fronts – security, economic, political, and cultural.

**Ensure a Strong U.S.-Israel Partnership:** Barack Obama strongly supports the U.S.-Israel relationship, a mutually beneficial bond strengthened by common values, histories, and dedication to democracy. Obama believes that our first and incontrovertible commitment in the Middle East must be to the security of Israel, America's strongest ally in the Middle East. Expressing his support for this reality, Obama delivered the message to Palestinian university students in Ramallah that the United States would never distance itself from Israel. Before the Palestinian elections, Obama asserted that the United States would never recognize Hamas unless it renounced its fundamental mission to eliminate Israel and he continues to insist that Hamas recognize Israel, abandon violence, and abide by previous agreements made between the Palestinian Authority and Israel.

**Support Israel's Right to Self Defense:** During the July 2006 Lebanon war, Barack Obama stood up strongly for Israel's right to defend itself from Hezbollah raids and rocket attacks. Obama is an original cosponsor of the Senate resolution expressing support for Israel, condemning the attacks, and calling for strong action against Iran and Syria. Throughout the war, Barack Obama made clear that Israel should not be pressured into a ceasefire that did not deal with the threat of Hezbollah missiles. In addition, Obama signed a letter to the European Union pressing the EU to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.

**Prevent Iran from Acquiring Nuclear Weapons:** Concerned about Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and regional ambitions, Barack Obama has been a strong voice warning of the dangers to both the United States and Israel if Iran successfully develops these weapons. Obama has been consistently outspoken about the growing influence of Iran in the region, especially Iraq, saying, "Make no mistake – if the Iranians and Syrians think they can use Iraq as another Afghanistan or a staging area from which to attack Israel or other countries, they

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are badly mistaken” [Speech to Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 11/20/06] Obama has called for stronger international sanctions against Iran to persuade it to halt uranium enrichment. He is a cosponsor of the Durbin-Smith Senate Bill, the Iran Counter Proliferation Act, which calls for sanctions on Iran and other countries for assisting Iran in developing a nuclear program. Believing that Americans must do more to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, Obama authored and introduced as the primary sponsor, the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act in May, 2007. Obama’s Bill makes it easier for state and local governments to divest their pension funds of companies that invest in Iran’s energy sector, providing the revenue Iran uses to pursue nuclear weapons and sponsor terrorism. Divestment is a useful tool to bring additional economic pressure to bear on Iran. Senator Obama has conducted an active dialogue with a range of Israeli political leaders and security officials regarding Iran and the threat it poses to the United States and Israel.

**Support Foreign Assistance to Israel:** Barack Obama has consistently supported foreign assistance to Israel. He defends and supports the annual foreign aid package that involves both military and economic assistance to Israel and has advocated increased foreign aid budgets to ensure that these funding priorities are met. Additionally, he has called for sustaining the unique U.S.-Israel defense relationship by fully funding military assistance and continuing cooperative work on missile defense programs, such as the Arrow.

**Work towards Two States Living Side by Side in Peace and Security:** Barack Obama believes in working towards a two-state solution, with both states living side by side in peace and security. Obama is a cosponsor of the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006. Introduced in the wake of Hamas’ victory in the Palestinian elections, this act outlaws direct assistance to any entity of the Palestinian Authority controlled by Hamas until it meets the conditions of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations to renounce violence, recognize Israel, and agree to abide by all agreements signed by the Palestinian Authority. Obama signed a letter urging President Bush to make it clear to Palestinian leaders that terrorist groups must either disarm or be barred from the political process. Since the elections, Obama has stated that Israelis must have a true Palestinian partner for peace. He has sought to encourage Palestinian moderates who seek peace and to isolate Hamas and other extremists who are committed to Israel’s destruction.

**Help Palestinian Families Get the Aid They Need Without Supporting Terrorism:** Barack Obama supports U.S. efforts to provide aid directly to the Palestinian people by bypassing any Hamas-led government that refuses to renounce violence and recognize Israel’s right to exist. Obama believes that a better life for Palestinian families is good for both Israelis and Palestinians.

**Limit Hezbollah’s Influence in the Region:** Barack Obama is concerned about the rapid re-arming of Hezbollah in Lebanon. He has called for the end of Syrian and Iranian support of Hezbollah via arms shipments and funding. Obama urged the enforcement of UN Resolution 1701, which demands the cessation of arms shipments to Hezbollah, a resolution that Syria and Iran continue to disregard. Long before the July 2006 conflict, Barack Obama worked to limit Hezbollah’s influence in the region, signing a letter urging President Bush to place al-Manar, the official television station of Hezbollah, on the Treasury Department’s Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity list and to aggressively target organizations that aid in its broadcast.

**Support U.S.-Israel Research and Development:** As a strong supporter of broadening and deepening the U.S.-Israel relationship, Barack Obama cosponsored the U.S.-Israel Energy Cooperation Act. This bill would establish a grant program to support joint U.S.-Israeli research and development efforts in the areas of alternative and renewable energy sources – a key step toward energy independence, which is very much in the national security interests of the U.S. and Israel.

**Achieve Energy Independence:** Looking for innovative ways to enhance U.S. and Israeli security through energy independence, Obama has pushed a number of initiatives – from E-85 to CAFE reform to biofuels. The purpose of these initiatives is to reduce U.S. dependence on oil from the Middle East, limiting the influence of oil-producing nations and increasing U.S. and Israeli national security.