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For Immediate Release

Contact: Josh Block
(202) 639-5273 office
(202) 997-4614 mobile

AIPAC MOURNS THE LOSS OF PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN

Washington, D.C.— AIPAC mourns the loss of President Ronald Reagan, who passed away Saturday at the age of 93.

President Reagan was a beacon of hope and optimism, a steady hand guiding America toward a vision of peace and prosperity, leaving an indelible legacy for generations to come. His impact on the U.S.-Israel relationship was dramatic, and the currency of his vision remains a guiding light for America's foreign policy.

Included in the immutable mark left by President Reagan are several key decisions of monumental importance to the U.S.-Israel relationship for which he was directly responsible.

Throughout his presidency, Ronald Reagan significantly reinforced the bonds between the United States and Israel, making that relationship between the only democracy in the Middle East and the world's greatest democracy, a fundamental tenet of America's foreign policy in the Middle East and beyond.

Rising above party and politics, President Reagan articulated the views of the United States when he said in September, 1984, "We who are friends of Israel may differ over tactics, but our goal remains always unchanged: Permanent security for the people of that brave state. In this great enterprise, the United States and Israel stand forever united."

Under his leadership, the United States and Israel in 1983 founded the Joint Political-Military Group (JPMG) and a group to oversee security assistance, the Joint Security Assistance Planning Group (JSAP). These mechanisms greatly enhanced the U.S.-Israel strategic partnership that to this day continues to greatly benefit both nations. They began the close strategic cooperation that continues and grows to this day.

By the conclusion of President Reagan's time in office, the U.S. and Israel regularly conducted joint military training, had begun to develop the Arrow Anti-Ballistic Missile system (currently the world's only fully deployed theater anti-missile system), and were deeply engaged in a host

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of cooperative and strategic dialogues whose importance in saving lives in both nations is incalculable.

Under President Reagan, the U.S.-Israel Free Trade Agreement was signed in 1985, allowing Israeli companies to compete equally with European companies in the United States. Since 1985, trade between the U.S. and Israel has increased by over 400 percent, totaling close to \$20 billion in 2003. Israel is now the United States' 21st leading trade partner. The U.S.-Israel Free Trade Agreement served as a model for other similar agreements, including with Canada and Mexico.

Upon signing the act implementing the agreement, President Reagan said, "I believe this new economic relationship with our friends in Israel will further our historic friendship, strengthen both of our economies, and provide for new opportunities between our peoples for communication and commerce."

During Israel's most severe economic crisis, in 1985, with inflation rates soaring as high as 445 percent, President Reagan approved, and Congress appropriated, \$1.5 billion in emergency assistance, providing Israel with a critical fiscal boost in her time of dire need. This aid allowed Israel to institute a number of economic reform measures that rescued Israel from hyperinflation, encouraging growth on a much more sound economic basis.

Additionally, under President Reagan's leadership, America's foreign assistance to Israel matured into the form it currently takes today. No longer composed of loans and grants, Israel today receives all of its economic and military assistance from the United States in grants. This formulation is a direct outgrowth of President Reagan's stewardship.

Above all, President Reagan recognized in Israel what we in the United States so deeply cherish about our own country: common values, a shared love for freedom, the necessity of democracy and the certain knowledge that where people and their governments embody those values, the world is a better, safer place for mankind.

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Consistently ranked as the most influential foreign policy lobbying organization on Capitol Hill, AIPAC is a nonpartisan American membership organization that seeks to strengthen the relationship between Israel and the United States. For more than 40 years, AIPAC has been working with Congress to build a strong, vibrant relationship between the United States and Israel. Its more than 85,000 activists throughout the United States work to improve and strengthen that relationship by supporting U.S.-Israel military, economic, scientific and cultural cooperation. Please visit our Web site at www.aipac.org.

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