

BILL SUMMARY

March 2015

The U.S.- Israel Trade Enhancement Act (S.619)

The U.S.-Israel Trade Enhancement Act seeks to combat the rising international tide of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) actions against Israel. Introduced by Senators Rob Portman (R-OH) and Ben Cardin (D-MD) the legislation takes on perhaps the most dangerous element of the international BDS campaign – deliberate efforts by European nations to target Israel economically for political reasons. The legislation seeks to leverage the United States’ economic weight to counter this element of BDS.

Key Provisions

Leverages the U.S. Economy to Roll Back BDS

- Establishes firm objectives for U.S. free trade negotiations with the European Union, including that the EU cease activities that could harm U.S.-Israel commerce and eliminate any politically-inspired barriers to trade with Israel;
- Requires the U.S. Trade Representative to seek the complete elimination of enforcement of the Arab League Boycott of Israel in free trade negotiations with other countries;

Safeguards First Amendment Protections

- Builds on strong precedent for utilizing free trade negotiations to press potential trading partners to cease harmful, anti-Israel actions. The bill would in no way infringe on protected freedoms such as speech and assembly;
- Targets the most materially harmful element of BDS: state or international institution-led actions that make ordinary business with Israel more difficult or liable to sanctions, civil or criminal penalty.