

# BILL SUMMARY

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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.