



# Middle East Spotlight

## **Congressional Support for Israel in 2015**

The United States and Israel will both undergo significant changes to their governments in 2015. With more than 70 freshman members of Congress taking office in January, and Israelis going to the polls to elect a new Knesset this March, both countries are poised to experience significant turnover in their legislative bodies.

Despite these wholesale changes, the U.S.-Israel relationship will continue to grow stronger regardless of who holds office.

Just this past December, the United States Congress reaffirmed America's commitment to the Jewish state by passing critical pro-Israel measures in the 2015 fiscal year omnibus appropriations bill. This key legislation provides \$3.1 billion in security assistance to Israel for 2015, which fulfills America's annual commitment to the Jewish state.

In addition, this federal spending bill allocates \$619 million toward U.S.-Israel missile defense programs, such as Iron Dome, Arrow and David's Sling. These critical defense technologies helped keep Israelis safe in the face of rocket fire from Gaza last summer, and are vital to protecting innocent civilians from threats on each of Israel's borders.

Along with providing security aid, the omnibus bill addresses key challenges facing the U.S.-Israel strategic partnership.

It increases congressional oversight of the Iranian nuclear negotiations by requiring the administration to submit monthly reports to Congress on the state of Iran's nuclear program. Additionally, the bill includes provisions that allow reductions in aid to the Palestinian Authority based on its support of terrorism, anti-Israel incitement, or unilateral actions at the United Nations. These measures strengthen Congress' ability to support Israel's security and promote the return to direct peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Although both allies have experienced significant changes in leadership, the United States and Israel have proven that their deep cooperation will only continue to bolster both countries as they seek to address the challenges of an increasingly uncertain world. Thanks to the persistent efforts on the part of pro-Israel Americans to engage Congress at all levels of leadership, those who care most about the safety and security of Israel have ensured that the United States will always stand shoulder-to-shoulder with its strongest ally.