

Congress Combats Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

Throughout this year, the United States Congress has continued to demonstrate strong support for the U.S.-Israel relationship on issues such as foreign aid, security assistance and oversight of Iran's nuclear program. Recently, lawmakers have sought to expand the U.S.-Israel relationship even further, by drafting legislation that seeks to combat the rising tide of international boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel.

In March, Sens. Rob Portman (R-OH) and Ben Cardin (D-MD) introduced the U.S.-Israel Trade Enhancement Act of 2015. Taking aim at government-led anti-Israel activities, the measure would leverage the ongoing free trade negotiations between the United States and the European Union in an effort to deter Europe's "commercial discrimination" sought by the BDS movement.

Reps. Peter Roskam (R-IL) and Juan Vargas (D-CA) introduced a similar bill in the House of Representatives that both counters state-sponsored boycott, divestment and sanctions against the Jewish state and seeks to bolster economic ties between the U.S. and Israel. The legislation directs the president to report annually to Congress on U.S. efforts to combat BDS, and implements new regulations requiring foreign entities traded on U.S. stock markets to disclose information that will make clear any instances of boycott, divestment and sanctions.

"These attacks not only threaten Israel, but commercial relations across the globe. The U.S-Israel Trade and Commercial Enhancement Act will ensure that American free trade partners never engage in this harmful and illegitimate political protest against Israel, while also protecting U.S. companies from foreign lawsuits targeting their associations with Israel," said Rep. Roskam.

"We need to reassure our commitment to our ally in the region by clearly defining U.S. policy to oppose this practice and dissuade other nations from adopting BDS policies toward Israel," said Rep. Vargas.

While 2015 has been a concerning year for Israel within international forums, the United States Congress is actively working to expand the U.S.-Israel alliance to combat the challenges ahead.