



Middle East Spotlight

Making Your Voice Heard in 2017

Last month, the United States underwent a significant shift in its government. Not only was a new president inaugurated, but more than 60 new lawmakers were sworn into the 115th Congress. As elected representatives of the American public, each member of Congress serves a unique role in transforming our advocacy into policy.

While Congress has traditionally supported a strong U.S.-Israel relationship, that support is not a given. It requires the pro-Israel community—individuals of diverse backgrounds and from across the political spectrum who care about the future of America and the Jewish state—to constantly educate policymakers about the relevant issues. The numerous pro-Israel initiatives advanced by the 114th Congress in 2015 and 2016 are a testament to the hard work of our community. For example:

- *Funding security assistance:* For Fiscal Year (FY) 2016, Congress provided Israel \$3.1 billion in security assistance and \$487 million in vital missile defense funding. For FY 2017, Congress is on track to provide Israel with \$3.1 billion in security assistance and \$600.7 million in missile defense.
- *Pushing back against Iran:* In late 2016, lawmakers overwhelmingly voted to extend the Iran Sanctions Act—99-0 in the Senate and 419-1 in the House of Representatives. This legislation will ensure that there are sanctions in place to “snap back” should Iran violate the nuclear deal.
- *Combatting the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement:* In 2015, lawmakers passed the Trade Promotion Authority (TPA), which instructed American diplomats negotiating a new trade deal with the European Union to make ending European BDS a key objective of the talks.
- *Pushing back against unilateral Palestinian efforts:* In November 2016, the House passed H. Con. Res. 165, a bipartisan resolution opposing one-sided U.N. Security Council actions against Israel and urging the administration to veto any such measures. The House and Senate sent bipartisan letters to the president in April 2016 and September 2016 respectively, conveying this message.

Moving forward, the work of the pro-Israel community remains crucial: Hamas continues to rebuild its rocket arsenal and terror tunnels; Hezbollah has as many as 150,000 rockets, mortars and missiles aimed at Israel; the Palestinian leadership continues unilateral efforts to impose a solution on Israel; and Iran continues to destabilize the region and fund terrorist proxy groups.

In 2017, please think about how you can help strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship and consider involving yourself in pro-Israel political activism. Together, we can strengthen, protect and promote the U.S.-Israel relationship in ways that enhance the security of the United States and Israel.

To learn more about how you can get involved in pro-Israel activism, please visit www.aipac.org.