



Middle East Spotlight

Why Bipartisanship is Essential

Politics in America is contentious. In fact, by some measures, Republicans and Democrats are more divided today than at any other time in the last two decades. Amid the challenges of a hyperpartisan political environment, there is only one way to ensure that American support for Israel remains strong over the long haul: bipartisanship.

Consider two facts: First, a partisan approach to the U.S.-Israel relationship would fail when the minority party in Congress inevitably became the majority, or when the party affiliation of the White House changed with a new administration. Bipartisanship is the only way to sustain and advance American policies that keep Israel safe, no matter which party is in power.

Second, a partisan approach is not conducive to the American legislative process. While most bills require a simple majority to pass, any one senator has the right to filibuster and block a bill's consideration. A bill in the Senate requires 60 votes (three-fifths) to overcome such opposition—a margin which one party rarely enjoys.

So, we in the pro-Israel community can never take for granted bipartisan support for Israel. We must continue to maintain relationships with our members of Congress and form new ones with candidates for office at the local, state and national levels. The hard—but rewarding—work of relationship building is the only way to strengthen, protect and promote the U.S.-Israel relationship.

Already, pro-Israel activists have laid the groundwork for continued bipartisan support in Congress, forming relationships with the seven new senators and 55 new House members. In the first days of the 115th Congress, on Jan. 5, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly adopted H. Res. 11, a bipartisan measure objecting to U.N. Security Council Resolution 2334, a one-sided, anti-Israel resolution adopted with U.S. acquiescence on Dec. 23. Notably, nearly 90% of freshman members supported the House resolution. In the Senate, a remarkable 78 senators have co-sponsored a similar measure.

Furthermore, presidents from both political parties have ensured vital funding for security assistance to Israel through three 10-year agreements: the first in 1998 pledged \$21.3 billion to Israel; the second in 2007 committed \$30 billion; and a third 10-year agreement signed in September 2016 will commit \$38 billion to Israel beginning in 2019. Overwhelming, bipartisan majorities in Congress have consistently ensured that the U.S. security assistance to Israel under these agreements is fully funded through the annual appropriations process.

But such outcomes are not a given: Securing bipartisan support for Israel requires the steadfast commitment of the pro-Israel community to overcome our differences and come together over this singular issue. By remaining true to this approach, we will chart a steady path toward ensuring a robust U.S.-Israel relationship in the decades to come.