

HOWARD FRIEDMAN'S
REMARKS AT THE SUMMIT OCT. 23RD 2006

As a political junkie, I've heard my share of news and analysis and I've come to appreciate the often entertaining play by play coverage offered up each Election Night.

News reporters have a great way with words. During one particular Election Night coverage a few years back, one anchorman stated with great confidence: "What we know is that there will be no decision until some of those races are decided."

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are just about two weeks away from our country's mid-term elections. With 435 House seats to be decided and 33 Senate seats in contention, nothing is certain about the outcome except for one undeniable certainty.

No matter who wins any given race, no matter which party gains or remains in power — AIPAC and the pro-Israel community will be ready.

You and I understand that Israel is at a highly vulnerable moment in its history. America's friendship is crucial to her safety and future security. Therefore the U.S.-Israel relationship cannot simply go into a holding pattern while new political leaders adjust and play catch up on the issues. It is our responsibility, and has been for more than half a century, to ensure that the mutually beneficial relationship between these two great democracies never frays or falters as a result of political change.

We have a huge stake in the outcome of these congressional elections. But because we anticipated volatility early on in the electoral cycle, we did the necessary work to be ready in any eventuality.

The day after the election, we will know everyone in the new Congress. And they will already know us.

How? How is it possible for a relatively small group of individuals to know every member of congress and every contender for Congress?

My friends, it happens because we operate in a manner that has us constantly reaching out to leaders and would be leaders at all levels. For you and me, for AIPAC, the election cycle has no beginning or end. It is constant.

We know that today's PTA president is tomorrow's State Senator, and that today's city councilwoman is next year's member of Congress.

That's why you here in Texas took a state rep like Democrat Gene Green to Israel --- because you understood that talented political professionals don't stay in one career position for long. Today, Gene Green is not only a congressman, representing Texas' 9th district, but he is the co-chair of the Democratic Working Group on Israel and someone who has revisited the Jewish State five times in just a few years.

When we accompanied a contender for the U.S. Senate to Israel and then introduced him to our friends and community leaders, we did so because we understood then that he could easily be a U.S. Senator, let alone a leading advocate for Israel and a featured speaker at the Summit, as our good friend, John Cornyn, was last night.

When we consistently build relationships with existing members of Congress and those seeking office, when we

strengthen bi-partisan support for this issue, then we ensure that whoever wins will already know us and what we care about.

Israel is not a Republican issue, nor is it an issue only for Democrats. Israel is an American value, of importance to all of us. In this highly charged political atmosphere, the importance of the U.S.-Israel bond must stand above party politics. The bi-partisan nature of our work is what makes us unique. And, it is what makes us so very effective.

Ladies and Gentlemen, AIPAC has met with or has position papers from nearly every viable candidate running for federal office this cycle.

Because of each of you, the pro-Israel community stands ready to work closely with Republicans and Democrats as we look ahead to the challenges facing us.

What are some of those legislative challenges?

When Congress reconvenes there are three major pieces of business that will need to be finished.

First, Foreign Aid – Right now \$2.46 billion dollars in foreign aid to Israel has been approved as part of a continuing resolution. When Congress reconvenes, they either need to extend the resolution to ensure funding for next year or vote on a new foreign aid budget for fiscal year 2007. In addition, we are working with our leaders in Congress to add **new** provisions that would help ensure Israel has early and easy access to military equipment in the event of another crisis like we saw this summer during the war with Hizballah.

Second, The Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act, which has passed the House, will need to pass in the Senate. As you know, the Act prohibits U.S. aid from going to the Hamas-led

Palestinian Authority until it renounces terrorism, recognizes Israel and all past agreements with the State of Israel. The bill continues to allow humanitarian assistance to go to the Palestinian people. But the bill sends a clear message— There will be no business as usual with a Hamas-led PA.

Third, earlier this month, the House passed historic legislation that opens new opportunities for the United States and Israel to strengthen joint cooperative homeland security efforts, similar to existing high-level cooperation on defense, agriculture, telecommunications, biotechnology, and other important areas.

The Senate still needs to take up this landmark legislation which, when passed, will further extend America and Israel's flourishing bi-lateral relationship.

My friends, because of strong pro-Israel support in Congress in the past, together we were able to accomplish some amazing feats.

The Iran Freedom Support Act, overwhelmingly passed earlier this fall by the House and Senate and signed by the President, renews and strengthens existing sanctions aimed at curtailing funds and international cooperation that Iran needs to pursue nuclear weapons.

In addition, at the height of the war and when criticism of Israel was growing louder on the airwaves, Congress passed resolutions this summer expressing overwhelming supporting for Israel in her two-front war against Hizballah and Hamas.

Indeed, the work of building the U.S. –Israel relationship is constant. Therefore our political work does not end in two weeks. It begins anew.

One of this fall's newest network programs tells the story of what happens behind the scenes of a fictional comedy show that is broadcast live on television each week.

A large clock hangs just above the fictional producer's desk, showing the hours, minutes and seconds until the time his show is set to broadcast each week.

As the show airs, the producer walks to the clock, smiles with contentment, and watches as the clock reads: 0 hours, 0 minutes, 0 seconds.

And then in a flash, the clock begins again: 168 hours, 0 minutes, 0 seconds --- the time remaining for him to prepare the next show.

So it is for all of us. The clock winds down, and then begins all over again.

The key to our success each and every election cycle is our individual commitment and ultimately, our ability to fill every single second purposefully.

Our tradition teaches: The time is short. The task is great.

To be continually successful, I believe we must commit to do more than simply reinvigorate our own involvement. We will have to reach out and expand our base of supporters and activists.

And so I ask each of you between now and January 1st, to commit to hosting a parlor meeting in your home for friends and family not yet engaged in our work. Ask them to commit to AIPAC. And ask them to commit to pro-Israel politics.

If we continue to build and deepen our political relationships, then we will be prepared for any event, for any political change, for the outcome of any race – no matter who wins office. You and I will be ready because, my friends, there is no alternative --- Israel needs us to be ready.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for all you do to ensure our success today and every day.

