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Thank you, Jeff Snyder for your very kind and warm introduction and for your friendship over the years.

Standing back stage doing my pre-speech warm-up – a few sips of water, a quick review of my text, deep breathing, maybe a couple of push-ups – I was trying not to think about how many people are out here today – focusing on the enormity of an audience generally doesn't equal – relaxation. But then, I found that the enormity of the audience was all I could think about – not to psych myself up – or out – but I couldn't stop focusing on the fact that thousands of you – more than any other gathering in AIPAC's long history – have trekked to Washington for this conference, for this moment.

Why? Why have so many more traveled so many miles to be here? Why this year – why now?

I'm going to hazard a guess – and I'm sure it's not because of the food – I think it's because you, like me, are worried.

Worried that the past twelve months have not been good – not for Israel, not for America, not for democracy. Nor for freedom. You're worried that Iran and Hizballah, Hamas, Al-Qaeda – you're worried that all of them are on the march.

Well, this is a difficult moment – a dark moment – in our history. You are worried. We are all worried. But you are here – you are here because you want to do something to make a difference.

So I want to begin my speech today where I usually end it – with thanks, and gratitude. Thanks because of the simple fact that you are here – because at this moment of difficulty and danger – you have come to see what you can do, and because you will not rest until we prevail.

This is a time to be worried – that is true. But I want to say something bold. Something our enemies would be surprised to hear. Because you came here, it is Iran, Hizballah, Hamas, and Al-Qaeda who should be worried – not you. Not us.

They should be worried – because this is our time. Our time to act. To be sure, it has been a difficult year. So many events of such great concern are taking place and shaping our world – for the worse.

Think back to the world as it was 12 months ago. Since we met last year, Iran is one year closer to a weapon it can use to achieve its goal of erasing Israel from the map.

Since we met last year, Iran is testing ballistic missiles that are more capable of reaching Israel and parts of Europe.

Since we met last year, Iranian engineers have added a new target to their list. They are working to extend their range to the United States.

Since we met last year, Hizballah, backed by Syria and Iran, launched a war against Israel, striking 4,000 times in 33 days. Now they are working to topple Lebanon's fragile government and struggling to regain positions on Israel's border.

Since we met last year, Qassam rockets, fired by Hamas, struck Israel more than 1,500 times. Palestinians targeted Israelis with close to 600 shootings and 400 roadside bombs.

Since we met last year, Hamas members continue to report to Syria and Iran to be trained in terror camps for what their leaders are proclaiming will soon be the final war to destroy the Zionist regime. Worse, 14 months after its election, a terrorist organization remains in control of the Palestinian Authority – thwarting any chance for meaningful progress with an Israel prepared to make peace.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is a dangerous moment. For America, vital interests in the region are at stake. For Israel, her very existence ultimately hangs in the balance.

But, also this year, there were important moments of counter punch by America, Israel, and the west that show, not only the immediate vulnerabilities of our enemies, but also, if we truly understand their meaning, these events show us the way forward to lasting victory. Because, my friends, if we have reason to be worried, we also have reason to hope.

American leadership and diplomacy have altered the playing field in Iran, in Lebanon, and with the Palestinians. This progress comes with a lesson and a warning.

We've learned that American leadership, combined with international cooperation makes a difference. But we should be mindful that this work is painstakingly slow – too slow – and if America eases the pressure – even just a little – small steps forward can easily be reversed into quantum leaps backward.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1737 was a watershed moment in the battle to stop Iran's march toward nuclear weapons. It finally put the international community on record – saying to Iran: You are in violation of international law and you must stop – or we will stop you.

In addition, the United States has worked with the Europeans to launch the most ambitious financial sanctions campaign against Iran that the world has seen since sanctions against Japan in the 1930's and South Africa in the 1980's.

And, At long last, Iran is beginning to feel the impact of our actions. In Lebanon – a combination of Israeli military action, American support and U.N. Resolution 1701 resulted in dramatic, though still very tenuous changes since those summer days of fear and fire. Last night the children of Haifa, Tzefat, Nahariya and neighboring towns of northern Israel slept in their beds, not in bomb shelters. Today, the Lebanese army has redeployed to the south, Hizballah, though still a menace, no longer controls one third of Lebanon, and instead of terrorists along Israel's northern border, there is an international force.

On the Palestinian front, the Quartet consisting of The United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations, agreed upon fundamental standards that a Hamas-led government must adhere to in order to gain international legitimacy or receive financial assistance. Hamas must recognize Israel's right to exist, end terrorism and abide by past agreements with Israel. And when Hamas balked at these criteria and continued to declare its intent to push Israel into the sea, the international community has, thus far, held firm, and the isolation of Hamas continues.

Of course, the predicate for all of this diplomatic and economic pressure is American resolve and American leadership. President Bush and his Administration should be commended for their unwavering commitment to Israel's security, his support for Israel during the war

with Lebanon, and the continued effort to galvanize the international community to stop Iran.

We must also express profound gratitude to Congress because it was equally necessary for Congress to act – as they did with overwhelming bipartisanship – to support the Administration's efforts and to provide clarity and teeth to American policies regarding Iran, Lebanon and with the Palestinians.

As we saw in one of yesterday's video presentations, it was also this past year that American businessman Warren Buffet made his first foreign investment ever – in an Israeli firm – Iscar.

He was asked why – why, when there is so much turmoil in the region, why – when so much venom and vengefulness is directed toward Israel for simply having the audacity to exist – why now would he invest \$4 billion dollars in Israel?

He said he was inspired by Israel's economic progress and pioneer spirit. He said, "Because I am confident Israel will be there 10 years from now."

But it's what Buffett said next that has special meaning for all of us here today. When the interviewer asked, what about 100 years – will Israel still be here?

Buffett said the following: "100 years from now, there may not be an Israel – but if there is no Israel, I'm certain there will be no America either."

My friends, in these first years of the 21st century, we are part of a fight for our future, for Israel's and America's continued existence – two nations joined by common values, by a common vision of how we live on this earth.

Shaping that vision is why you are here. To make real our dream for a safe and secure future, our motto must be: "First words. Then deeds." International condemnation must be followed by international actions to compel a real change within Iran, Hamas and Hizballah.

So what is our action agenda as we move forward?

First, on Iran. My friends, it is no secret that we gather in our nation's capital at a highly charged, deeply partisan moment on a host of

foreign policy and domestic questions. But Iran is an issue that must be treated differently. We must ask our elected officials to put aside their partisan divides and work together to avert disaster.

We should be mindful that President Ahmadinejad and the Mullahs in Iran are watching Washington very closely – taking their measure of our resolve each day. Any sign of weakness, any sense that we are willing to take options off the table will be taken as a signal that they can proceed with their plans. America's message must be clear on this issue – no divisions, no weakness.

The next phase in the campaign to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power is based on the proven fact that the initial financial sanctions are beginning to take hold.

For those who told us that sanctions couldn't possibly work, Washington Post columnist David Ignatius, begs to differ. In a recent column he wrote, that these new targeted financial measures are to traditional sanctions what Super Glue is to Elmer's Glue. They actually stick.

Some have suggested that this is the time to try to accommodate Iran, that if only the United States would offer to sit down at the table, all of our differences could be resolved. But we should remember that Iran has consistently exploited the negotiations process to advance a nuclear program that it kept secret for nearly twenty years.

We should be under no illusions that Iran is stopping its nuclear march or that current sanctions are sufficient. But the fact is as we gather here today, Iran is not yet a nuclear power. There is still time to stop them. But it will require a much more robust diplomatic, political, and economic sanctions regime. And that is why we must demand the U.N. Security Council quickly adopt additional and stiffer sanctions.

That is also why tomorrow, we will lobby for the passage of a new piece of legislation – The Iran Counterproliferation Act of 2007. The act, sponsored by Congressman Tom Lantos and Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen in the House and a companion bill in the Senate, will not only encourage the United Nations to act, it will include prescriptions to increase pressure on those nations that continue to help Iran.

The legislation, for example would prohibit a nuclear cooperation agreement with Russia, unless it stops aiding Iran's nuclear program

and includes measures aimed at further restricting Iranian access to the international banking system.

Our critical congressional efforts on Capitol Hill are at the forefront of our work. But given the stakes, we must take our lobbying beyond the Capitol down the street to the capitols in your home states.

That is why AIPAC will begin working with specific states to examine other avenues to choke off the funds Iran needs to build the bomb.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Iranian economy relies on money, expertise, equipment and technology provided by foreign, publicly-traded companies doing business in Iran in which millions of Americans own stock.

Within a single pension fund in California – CalPERS – it was found that the fund had more than one billion dollars invested in foreign companies developing Iran’s energy sector. If the largest state pension funds in this country were to divest from companies with ties to Iran, it would have a crippling effect on Iran’s economy.

In this next year, AIPAC will be working with our partners in Jewish and other organizations to support divestment efforts in ten states around the country. We will be asking you to work with your state’s decision makers to educate them and to ask them to ensure that their state’s pension funds divest from a regime that threatens the safety of our world.

Stiff sanctions and targeted divestments – these will be our focus as we work to keep the pressure on Iran.

Next, the Palestinians. When Palestinian President Abbas agreed last month in Mecca, to permit his Fatah Party to join Hamas in a unity government without demanding that they first adhere to the Quartet requirements, it raised the most profound questions about his intentions, his ability to lead and quite frankly the very strategy for dealing with him.

We must ask: Where is President Abbas leading his people? Is he leading them toward Hamas or toward the United States and Israel?

If his answer is Hamas, then we must make sure that he understands that the consequence will be continued political, economic and diplomatic isolation for the Palestinian Authority. If it is toward the

United States and Israel, it could provide an opening for diplomatic progress to begin.

Good friends, it is important to remember that our meetings tomorrow are a chance to convey to members of Congress why it is so critical that the Palestinian President follow his words with deeds and what it will mean for the future of his people if he doesn't.

To help make that abundantly clear, we are asking members in the Senate to sign the Nelson-Ensign letter which will be sent to Secretary of State Rice, asking the Administration to continue its unwavering adherence to the Quartet principles.

In the House, we will be asking members to sign the Wexler, Gallegly, Ackerman, Pence letter being sent to the European Union. The letter asks the EU to stand strong on the premise that there should be no diplomatic contact and no financial aid—other than humanitarian – to the Hamas- led Palestinian Authority until it accepts the Quartet principles.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we must do all we can to ensure that Iran, Hamas and Hizballah fail. But with the outcome uncertain, the U.S.- Israel alliance becomes more important than ever.

And this brings us to our final lobbying item for tomorrow. A vital part of the U.S.-Israel alliance manifests itself in American financial assistance to Israel.

Many of you are aware that the underlying agreement for American aid to Israel, that has been in place for the last decade, expires this year.

When that aid accord was achieved in 1997, it was based on a set of assumptions regarding the threats that Israel was likely to face over a ten-year horizon. Keep in mind, that 1997 represented a high watermark of the Oslo process.

Who could have imagined what was to come? Terror. War. Regional and international isolation. To be sure, in 1997, there were threats. But they are not comparable to the challenges that Israel faces today, nor the dangers she will likely face in the decade to come.

In preparing for these threats, Israel will certainly do its part in terms of increased military service by its citizens, greater defense spending and in the development of new defense technologies. But without

question, she will not be able to do it alone. The only reliable partner in responding to this challenge is the United States of America.

And that is why our conversations tomorrow are so critical. Not only do we need to secure this year's current request of \$2.4 billion to ensure Israel's qualitative military edge, but we must begin to lay the groundwork about the importance of Israel's future aid as well.

For many members of Congress, the 65 freshmen members, in particular, this will be their first conversation, and candidly, their first real education about the value and importance of American aid to Israel. Tomorrow is a critical teaching opportunity for each one of us.

My friends, we cannot afford to fall short. We cannot afford to be distracted or intimidated. And quite frankly, that is exactly what our detractors are trying to do.

In the past year, the voices of prominent critics – decorated generals, accomplished academics, and yes, even a former president have been heard repeating anew the old libels our ancestors heard in different lands, at different times.

Again, I ask: why now? Why now are they raising their voices?

I know when you hear these critics speak, it's tempting to hear the very idea of Israel, under attack. But when they advance their slanders – when they recycle the old charges of our old enemies with new insistence, I hear something else.

I hear the voice of frustration. Frustration – because we are winning this war of ideas. Frustration – because American friends of Israel have the will, resolve and strength of spirit to be heard. Frustration – because the relationship between America and Israel is strong and growing stronger.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our detractors are frustrated by our success, and the only response to them must be continued success.

It was the spring of 1948 – Jerusalem and its 100,000 residents were under siege. The city was cut off from all contact with the coast. The people there, isolated, alone – measuring out their dwindling supplies of food, water and ammunition. Would there be enough for another day, another meal, another battle? Each night– in the self-imposed

darkness that is the last protection of a city under siege – talk focused on the hope that Jewish forces would break through the Arab legions' lines.

Three times in those dark days, forces tried the Arab line – three times they failed. Each time – each failure was a test of spirit – could the people of Jerusalem endure? Could they persevere against the darkness until the moment of their deliverance?

My friends, we say of that time, Jerusalem did not yield – Jerusalem did not break.

But what we mean is that the people of Jerusalem – the men, women and children in that city – the grandmother singing a frightened child to sleep, the father whose plate was empty so that his pregnant wife might eat, the boy or girl of those dark nights who braved the fear to become the mother or father of one of us.

The people did not break. They rose each day resolved to save their families...and they saved a city. In saving a city, they built a nation. They had so little – and still, they had enough. They had so little – and what they had, they gave.

So what of us? What if...What if what we have and who we are is preparation for who we must be at this hour of need? What will we do – in this time of darkness and danger? What will we give – to save a nation under siege?

I look around this room, and I know what our answer will be. I see the men and women of AIPAC possessing the stamina and resolve to transform this dark moment into a time of deliverance, a time of strength and security, a time of freedom and peace.

When the historians write of this period, when they recall the extraordinary efforts to repel the enemies of Israel and America – they will almost certainly write that Israel did not break, that America did not yield.

But they will mean that the people of Israel did not break, and that you did not yield.

Thank you.