

House Republican Leader John Boehner
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Well Ron – thank you for that very kind and polite introduction and ladies and gentlemen, thank you for being here and thank you for your commitment to Israel. You know it's one thing for all of you to come here to Washington to lobby the nation's lawmakers about your cause. But over the course of my 16 years here in Congress, I have visited Congressional Districts for members and candidates all over the country and it's amazing to me that virtually every one of these events one of you were there. As a matter of fact, when I saw Ron before the program started, he reminded me that I met him in Scottsdale, Arizona at an event and so I'm here to say thank you. Thank you for your commitment and thank you for your willingness to come to town and to press your cause.

As Ron pointed out in 1998, I did in fact take a group of members – a bipartisan group of members to Israel. As all of you know and as all of my colleagues in the Congress know that there's no way you can understand the issues that Israel faces unless you're willing to go there. And I'll never forget – and I'll never forget the view out my window the morning after I arrived. It was probably a view that none of you have ever seen – eight inches of snow all over Jerusalem. I didn't know they got snow in Jerusalem but there it was; it was absolutely gorgeous. Of course by the end of the day it was virtually gone. But I had a chance to go to the Golan Heights; I had a chance to – to walk the streets of Jerusalem and had an opportunity to understand the geography and the fears that many face and the fight that Israel has been in over the last 60 years to preserve its independence. Ron also mentioned that when I was here last year I made a commitment to you – not to bring any legislation to the floor that in any way could be construed as anti-Israel. I kept that commitment last year – as all of you know, during the election we lost.

So I don't control the Floor anymore but I remain committed to the promise that I made you that I will never support legislation that is perceived or is anti-Israel or support groups that hate Israel.

Last summer when Hezbollah attacked Israel it was a wake-up call for all of us here in America. I, along with then Chairman, Henry Hyde and the current Chairman of the International Relations Committee, Tom Lantos sponsored a resolution; it passed overwhelmingly in the House of Representatives and I said during that debate that the enemies of America and Israel are the same, and the

rise of radical Islamic fundamentalism has real security implications for both nations. The same ideology that's been at work to destroy Israel is the same ideology attempting to destroy America and its allies.

We didn't start this war with radical Islam; they started the war with us. Over the next few days you're going to have opportunities to talk to your member of Congress – your Representatives and your Senators about Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the impact of these forces on Israel. But I want to challenge all of you to take a step back. As you heard last night from Prime Minister Olmert, the threat that we face in the Middle East is not only aimed at Israel but it's aimed at the United States as well. A lot of people believe that America wasn't involved in this until the attacks of 09/11; but I want to take you back – take you back some 25 years to look at what happened in Tehran in 1979 when they took 400 of our hostages in Iran and then you can look at what happened in Beirut in 1983 when they attacked – the radical Islam attacked our Marine barracks. Somalia in 1993 in the war with them and look at the Khobar Towers attack in 1996 or how about our two Embassies that were bombed in 1998 in Africa? Who could ever forget the USS Cole off the Coast of Yemen that was attacked – all by radical Islamic fundamentalists – intent on bringing war to America; and what did America do? We did what world leaders did for 25 years; we looked up, we looked away, and just hoped the problem would go away. We tend to forget that the United States has been under attack for these last 25 years and I don't think after 09/11 when 3,000 of our fellow citizens died at the hands of radical Islamic terrorists I don't think that we can afford to look up, look away and just hope the problem goes away.

All of you know better than most Americans that the – the rise of radical Islamic fundamentalism continues to grow throughout the world. And it's not just growing in the Middle East; it's growing in Europe; it's growing in Asia and it's growing in Africa. People being – being taught to hate Israel and to hate America and they're being raised this way and they're raising armies of people to take us on. They don't believe that we have the fortitude to stand up and to protect Israel or the fortitude as Americans to stand up and protect ourselves, because one only has to look at what happened for 25 years. When the fight got tough we tended to walk away. They don't believe that we have the fortitude to take them on and to win but I ask all of you – I ask all of you because this is a very difficult subject to think about what's happening in the Middle East today – to think about what's happening in Iraq and not understand that it's all truly the same enemies aimed at Israel and aimed at the United States of America.

No one likes what's been happening in Iraq; it's a subject – it's a subject that no one really wants to talk about. We're Americans, the

greatest Pollyannas in the history of the world. We just want it to go away; the problems that we face there and the fight that we face there are not just going to go away. I have not given a speech over the last 14 months when I didn't talk about the most unpleasant subject in American society today. And the reason I talk about it is because the consequences of the fight there are immense for Israel and for the United States. And while we may have gone there with faulty intelligence while there have been all kinds of mistakes that have been there it's Al Qaeda and Iran who have made the fight in Iraq the central front in our war with radical Islamic terrorists.

Yes; there are sectarian violence in Iraq. Yes; there are gangs who are intent on driving us out. But let's also understand that Al Qaeda has made this the central front in our war with them. They're continuing to recruit people from all over the world to come in and to fight us and who doesn't believe that Iran stands there sending people in, spreading money, and doing everything they can to stir up more sectarian violence? Why – because they want greater influence in the Middle East. It's bad enough that they're supporting Hezbollah and funding their efforts, helping them to rebuild their armies and re-equip them. There's no question that they're involved in helping Hamas, but they're also intent on driving America out of here because they don't think that we have the fortitude to stand up and to take on the terrorists and to win.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm here to tell you that the consequences of failure in Iraq are so ominous that you can't even begin to think about it. Think about what happens [*Emphasis Added*] if we pull out of Iraq; let's think about what happens if we have failure there. Iran growing influence in the region and we'll talk about this, but how about Al Qaeda – a safe haven for terrorists and possible access to their oil revenues and who doesn't believe that they won't use that to begin to attack Israel and America? But stop and think about the Iranians, who are heavily engaged in this fight today and the influence they'll have not only with other Shia governments in the area but the unsettling effect it will have on those moderate Arab States who have been trying to find some way to come to some agreement. And who doesn't believe – who doesn't believe that failure in Iraq is not a direct threat to the very existence of Israel? And if all of that isn't bad enough, who doesn't believe that if we walk away from this fight that these people won't follow us home to America? Ladies and gentlemen, we have no choice but to win in Iraq. [*Emphasis Added*]

Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen I know this is not a subject that's pleasant. And I know that – that my words may not console all of you. I came to Congress not because I wanted to be a

Congressman; I came to Washington because I wanted to do something. I believed in freedom. Ron talked about my determination; some of you know I have eight brothers and three sisters, and my dad owned a bar. And I've gotten through life and ended up in places that I never thought I'd be and I can tell you I never thought I'd be in Washington. I never thought I'd serve in public office. And I certainly never thought that I'd be standing in front of an audience like this. But ladies and gentlemen, every generation of Americans has had its challenge, whether it was the challenge we faced in Vietnam or the challenge we faced in Korea, the challenge that our nation faced in World War II – now ladies and gentlemen this is our generation's challenge. Our men and women in the military are over in Iraq showing their fortitude, doing their duty to help protect the world and to help protect us and I think the big question – the big question that we have to ask ourselves today is do we have that fortitude? Are we willing to stand up and to do our duty – not for ourselves but for our kids and theirs and to protect the freedom that we have in this country and to protect the freedom and – and the freedom of expression that we see in Israel? Ladies and gentlemen it's our challenge; are we up to it? [*Emphasis Added*]

God bless you.