

CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS COMMEMORATE ISRAEL'S 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)

I'm pleased to join Leader Boehner as the co-sponsors of this legislation and thank Chairman Howard Berman and Ranking Member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen for their leadership in bringing this legislation to the floor and for leading us in our strong friendship with the state of Israel. I thank Mr. Berman for following so ably in the footsteps of Mr. Lantos as he follows the tradition of Chairman Lantos, whose loss we feel every day.

Mr. Speaker, this weekend, families around the world, including my own grandchildren, have gathered around the Seder table to retell the biblical story of freedom and hope that is Passover.

The closing words of the Passover Haggadah evoke the age-old yearning of the Jewish people to return to Zion. Today, in Congress, we mark the fulfillment of these aspirations by observing the founding of the modern state of Israel. By recognizing the 60th anniversary of Israel, we reaffirm the bonds of close friendship and cooperation between the United States and Israel.

I'm pleased to join Republican Leader Boehner as the co-sponsors of this legislation, as I am pleased to join him in leading a delegation to Israel in a few weeks to be part of the 60th anniversary observance.

Mr. Speaker, the creation of Israel stands out as one of the greatest achievements of the 20th century, and as a beacon of hope to the world. President Truman's role in recognizing the new state just 11 minutes after its proclamation is a source of pride for all Americans. It is also a symbol of the strength of the friendship between our countries.

I note that this congressional recognition comes a little less than a month before Israel's Independence Day, but this allows us a few weeks of festivities to bring in the May celebration.

In this body, we sometime have political differences, but today, and every day, we speak with one voice, united with Israel. As we support Israel now, we recognize that the national security of Israel is in our national interest.

A week ago today, Noam Shalit, father of Gilad Shalit came to my office. Gilad was captured from his army base in Israel near the Gaza border on June 25, 2006.

For almost two years now, Gilad has been held in captivity. Our thoughts are with him and his family, as well as all of the other missing Israeli soldiers, such as Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. We will continue to work for their release from captivity.

Mr. Speaker, every leader from the region who comes into my office or just other people that I find worthy of knowing about this, I show the dog tags of Eldad, Ehud, and Gilad as a constant reminder in the Speaker's office of our commitment to them and to their freedom.

In America's partnership with Israel, we have both given support and we have drawn strength. We share a common history – nations founded to be beacons of democracy, forged by pioneers, and fulfilled by immigrants in search of a better tomorrow. We also share a common cause – a safe and secure Israel, living in peace with her neighbors.

Mr. Speaker, I urge our colleagues to speak with one voice, and support this resolution recognizing the 60th anniversary of the state of Israel. In doing so, we not only commend Israel, we also bring luster to this House by associating ourselves with that great state of Israel.”