

Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN) & Marshall Cooper AIPAC Policy Conference 2009 May 4, 2009

Marshall Cooper: Good morning. My name is Marshall Cooper. Growing up in a very Zionist Jewish household I always felt a close association with Israel. So in 2000, as the Second Intifada raged, a friend told me about AIPAC and I began to get involved as a way to fulfill my desire to help Israel. My work with AIPAC quickly taught me that relationships matter and I was about to find out just how much.

Rep. Mike Pence: Good morning. My name is Mike Pence. I'm a congressman from the state of Indiana. Growing up in a small town of Columbus, Indiana, some of you might be wondering why a young boy from the heartland of America would come to Washington D.C. with a love for Israel. Though I know of no synagogues in my district, let me say emphatically, like the overwhelming majority of my constituents, my Christian faith compels me to cherish the state of Israel.

In the year 2000 when I was first selected to Congress, Israel was already a priority to me. I really looked forward to being in a position where I knew I could help fulfill what I believed was not only right for America but the right thing to do.

Marshall Cooper: As my involvement with AIPAC grew deeper, I reached out to a new member of congress thinking he might be new to the issue of Israel. I was surprised just how wrong I was. Congressman Pence was not only extremely knowledgeable about Israel's history and challenges, but he was clearly already a passionate advocate for a strong U.S.-Israel alliance.

Rep. Mike Pence: But that didn't mean I didn't need AIPAC or that I didn't come to rely on Marshall for information, for his thoughts, and sometimes just for the chance to think through an issue with someone who sees the world the way I do. You see, I'm blessed with a talented and committed staff, but they have to become fast experts on just about everything from finding a lost Social Security check to wading through difficult issues like healthcare, energy, and the economy. Frankly, I welcomed the chance to turn to Marshall and to AIPAC for additional expertise regarding Israel.

Interacting with Marshall and working with AIPAC has provided me with invaluable insights and information as I work on the difficult issues facing the Middle East and Israel. Marshall really and truly became a permanent part of my work and my life and my family's life, a good and reliable friend, someone with whom I shared core values.

Marshall Cooper: We started out talking politics, a topic we're both passionate about. Then it was sports and a shared interest in the media. Congressman Pence had been a broadcaster and I owned a publishing company. Then we vacationed together at our family's summer house. As you all know, when you spend three days together camping, canoeing, cooking out, you really get to know someone. Well, not only were we still speaking to one another by the end of the vacation, since then few days go by that we don't speak.

Over the years that freshman member of Congress I met almost a decade ago has become the third ranking member of his party and now serves as chairman of the House Republican conference. Throughout the years I've been proud and incredibly grateful for the actions Congressman Pence has taken as a leader, condemning the International Court for criticizing Israel's security barrier, introduce -- introducing legislation with his colleague Gary Ackerman to sanction Iran's central bank, and voting for the foreign aid bill even when unrelated language in the bill made it an unpopular piece of legislation for many in his party.

Congressman Pence doesn't just stick by Israel. He leads and he does so without hesitation. I admire Congressman Pence's strong sense of wrong and right and his willingness always to take action.

Rep. Mike Pence: Thank you, Marshall. You know, it was said years ago if you want a friend in this town, get a dog. Might also say these days if you want a friend, get a dog or a Facebook page. Whoever gave those jaded answers never knew Marshall Cooper. In Washington D.C. it's easy to get a little bit jaded; a little bit cynical, I suppose. Just when I find myself feeling that way, Marshall calls and that reminds me that more than anything else relationships with men and women of integrity matter for America and for Israel.

Marshall Cooper: Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in showing our gratitude to America's and Israel's good friend, my good friend Congressman Mike Pence.