



## **BARACK OBAMA AND JOE BIDEN: A STRONG RECORD OF SUPPORTING THE SECURITY, PEACE, AND PROSPERITY OF ISRAEL**

*"Our alliance is based on shared interests and shared values. Those who threaten Israel threaten us. Israel has always faced these threats on the front lines. And I will bring to the White House an unshakeable commitment to Israel's security...I will ensure that Israel can defend itself from any threat - from Gaza to Tehran.... Across the political spectrum, Israelis understand that real security can only come through lasting peace. And that is why we - as friends of Israel - must resolve to do all we can to help Israel and its neighbors to achieve it."*

[Obama Speech at 2008 AIPAC Policy Conference, 6/4/08]

### **BARACK OBAMA AND JOE BIDEN'S PLAN TO STRENGTHEN THE U.S.- ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP**

Barack Obama and Joe Biden have established a strong record as true friends of Israel, stalwart defenders of Israel's security, and effective advocates of strengthening the steadfast U.S.-Israel relationship. They believe that Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state should never be challenged. As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Obama has consistently emphasized his commitment to our ally Israel, and has been an active supporter of legislation helping to ensure the support and security of the Middle East's only established democracy. Obama continually works with a number of his colleagues in the Senate to promote a closer relationship between the U.S. and Israel on a range of fronts – security, economic, political, and cultural. He has traveled to Israel, most recently in 2008, to convey to Israel's leaders and citizens his commitment to the close friendship between Israel and the United States, and his determination to help Israel defend itself from the serious threats it faces and pursue peace with neighbors who seek to achieve it.

**Ensure a Strong U.S.-Israel Partnership:** Barack Obama and Joe Biden strongly support the U.S.-Israel relationship, a bond that is mutually beneficial to each country as we share common values, histories, and a dedication to democracy. They believe that our first and incontrovertible commitment in the Middle East must be to the security of Israel, America's strongest ally in the Middle East. Expressing his support for this reality, Obama delivered the message in 2006 to Palestinian university students in Ramallah that the United States would never distance itself from Israel. Senator Obama opposed Hamas' participation in the 2006 Palestinian Authority elections, and he continues to insist that Hamas recognize Israel, abandon violence, and abide by previous agreements made between the Palestinian Authority and Israel before the United States could recognize it as a legitimate actor.

**Prevent Iran from Acquiring Nuclear Weapons:** Understanding that the United States, Israel, and our European allies must take strong action to prevent Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, Barack Obama authored and introduced as the primary sponsor in May 2007 the leading piece of legislation in the Senate aimed at containing Iran through tough sanctions. His "Iran Sanctions Enabling Act" will make it easier for state and local governments to divest their pension funds from companies that invest in Iran's energy sector, providing the revenue Iran uses to pursue nuclear weapons and sponsor terrorism. Obama drafted this important legislation after consultations on the issue with former Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. Consistently, Senator Obama has been outspoken regarding the growing influence of Iran in the region, especially in Iraq, "The Iranian regime supports violent extremists and challenges us across the region. It pursues a nuclear capability that could spark a dangerous arms race, and raise the prospect of a transfer of nuclear know-how to terrorists. Its President denies the Holocaust and threatens to wipe Israel off the map. The danger from Iran is grave, it is real, and my goal will be to eliminate this threat." [Speech at the 2008 AIPAC Policy Conference, 6/4/08]. In his July 2008 visit to Israel, Obama conducted an active dialogue with a range of Israeli political leaders and security officials regarding Iran and the threat it poses to both our countries.

**Support Israel's Right to Self Defense:** During the July 2006 Lebanon war, Barack Obama and Joe Biden stood up strongly for Israel's right to defend itself from Hezbollah raids and rocket attacks. Obama is an original cosponsor of the Senate resolution expressing support for Israel, condemning the attacks, and calling for strong action against Iran and Syria. Throughout the war, Barack Obama made clear that Israel should not be pressured into a ceasefire that did not deal with the threat of Hezbollah missiles. Senator Obama remains concerned about the rapid re-arming of Hezbollah in Lebanon since the ceasefire. In addition, Obama signed a letter to the European Union pressing the EU to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist organization. Long before the July 2006 conflict, Barack Obama worked to limit Hezbollah's influence in the region, signing a letter urging President Bush to place al-Manar, the official television station of Hezbollah, on the Treasury Department's Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity list and to aggressively target organizations that aid in its broadcast.

**Work towards Ending Hamas Rocket Attacks:** In his visit to Israel on July 23, 2008, Barack Obama visited the Israeli town of Sderot and stood in solidarity with its residents, who have endured an endless onslaught of Hamas' Qassam rockets. On that day, he declared: "The state of Israel faces determined enemies who seek its destruction. But it also has a friend and ally in the United States that will always stand by the people of Israel. That's why I'm proud to be here today and that's why I will work from the moment that I return to America, to tell the story of Sderot and to make sure that the good people who live here are enjoying a future of peace and security and hope." [Press Conference, 7/23/08] In January, 2008, Senator Obama sent a letter to our United Nations Representative urging that any resolution concerning the situation in Gaza should "clearly and unequivocally condemn the rocket attacks against Israel, and should make clear that Israel has the right to defend itself against such actions." [Letter to Amb. Zalmay Khalilzad, 1/22/08]

**Support Foreign Assistance to Israel:** Barack Obama and Joe Biden have consistently supported the annual foreign aid package that involves both military and economic assistance to Israel and has advocated increased foreign aid budgets to ensure that these funding priorities are met. Additionally, Obama has called for sustaining the unique U.S.-Israel defense relationship by fully funding military assistance and continuing cooperative work on missile defense programs, such as the Arrow. He recently laid out a bold vision for further strengthening the U.S.-Israel alliance, stating, "Defense cooperation between the United States and Israel is a model of success, and must be deepened. As president, I will implement a Memorandum of Understanding that provides \$30 billion in assistance to Israel over the next decade - investments to Israel's security that will not be tied to any other nation. ... Going forward, we can enhance our cooperation on missile defense. We should export military equipment to our ally Israel under the same guidelines as NATO." [Speech at the 2008 AIPAC Policy Conference, 6/4/08]

**Work towards Two States Living Side by Side in Peace and Security:** Barack Obama and Joe Biden believe in working towards a two-state solution, with both states living side by side in peace and security. To that end, Senators Obama and Biden are cosponsors of the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006. Introduced in the wake of Hamas' victory in the Palestinian elections, this act outlaws direct assistance to any entity of the Palestinian Authority controlled by Hamas until it meets the conditions of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations to renounce violence, recognize Israel, and agree to abide by all agreements signed by the Palestinian Authority. Obama signed a letter urging President Bush to make it clear to Palestinian leaders that terrorist groups must either disarm or be barred from the political process. Since the elections, Obama has stated that Israelis must have a true Palestinian partner for peace. He will encourage the strengthening of the Palestinian moderates who seek peace and work to isolate Hamas and other extremists who are committed to Israel's destruction.

**Support U.S.-Israel Research and Development and Energy Independence:** As a strong supporter of broadening and deepening the U.S.-Israel relationship, Barack Obama cosponsored the U.S.-Israel Energy Cooperation Act. This bill would establish a grant program to support joint U.S.-Israeli research and development efforts in the areas of alternative and renewable energy sources – a key step toward energy independence, which is very much in the national security interests of the U.S. and Israel. Looking for innovative ways to enhance U.S. and Israeli security through energy independence, Obama has pushed a number of initiatives – from E-85 to CAFE reform to biofuels. The purpose of these initiatives is to reduce U.S. dependence on oil from the Middle East, limiting the influence of oil-producing nations and strengthening U.S. and Israeli national security.