



# DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES

*support*

# ISRAEL

*All of the three major Democratic candidates (who remain in the Presidential race) are strong supporters of Israel. Here are some important facts about all three candidates - in alphabetical order.*

## **SENATOR HILLARY CLINTON**

**Senator Clinton has an outstanding record of leadership in the U.S. Senate on issues related to the U.S. Israel relationship.** Since her election in 2000, Senator Clinton has compiled a very strong voting record on pro-Israel issues. She has cosponsored key pieces of pro-Israel legislation, including the Syria Accountability Act and Palestinian Anti-Terror Act, and signed numerous letters urging action on behalf of the State of Israel. She has repeatedly voted for foreign aid. Senator Clinton introduced legislation calling for the immediate release of the three Israeli soldiers captured by Hamas and Hezbollah.

**Clinton has been a leading voice against the anti-Semitism in Palestinian school textbooks. She joined with the Palestinian Media Watch in February 2007 in releasing a report exposing the continuation of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic language in Palestinian school textbooks.** Her full statement on this issue is available at [http://www.pmw.org.il/Bulletins\\_Feb2007.htm](http://www.pmw.org.il/Bulletins_Feb2007.htm).

**Senator Clinton sponsored legislation that limited U.S. contributions to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) until it recognized the Magen David Adom (MDA), Israel's version of the Red Cross.** This pressure resulted in the ICRC finally admitting MDA into the International Red Cross in the summer of 2006. [Senator Clinton's position paper on the U.S.-Israel relationship]

**Clinton's strong support for Israel has been recognized time and again in the Jewish Community.** For example, the Orthodox Newspaper, *The Jewish Press*, which opposed Clinton in 2000, wrote in support of her candidacy for re-election to the Senate in 2006: "As regards Israel, she has become an important supporter of the Jewish state both in public and, perhaps more importantly, behind the scenes. She is held in the highest regard by those who regularly plead Israel's cause in the halls of government. For those who initially were wary of her positions on Middle East issues - and we include ourselves in that category - Ms. Clinton has proved to be a pleasant and welcome surprise."

In a further example, Yeshiva University presented Senator Clinton with an honorary degree in January 2006 and cited her support for Israel as one of the primary reasons. University President Richard Joel praised not only her "political leadership" on Capitol Hill, but also her "commitment to peace and security for the Jewish homeland." He handed her a diploma and told her, "You are a strong advocate for religious freedom, and in so many ways an inspiration."

[*The Jewish News*, 9/6/06:

[http://www.jewishpress.com/displayContent\\_new.cfm?mode=a&sectionid=59&contentid=19370&contentName=Jewish%20Press%20Endorsements](http://www.jewishpress.com/displayContent_new.cfm?mode=a&sectionid=59&contentid=19370&contentName=Jewish%20Press%20Endorsements) and *The Village Voice*, 1/10/06: <http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0602,lombardi,71631,5.html>]

**As first lady in Arkansas, Clinton demonstrated her admiration for an innovative Israeli preschool education program which she brought to her state.** To this day, her picture hangs on the Hebrew University's Mount Scopus campus. [*Haaretz*, 1/24/07: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/816545.html>.]

**Clinton has visited Israel more than a half dozen times.** In 1994, as first lady, she slipped a prayer into the Western Wall and said to cheering supporters, "This is from the heart." [*Associated Press*, 10/27/94]

**Senator Clinton speaks eloquently about her support for Israel.** At the National Jewish Democratic Council's 2007 Washington Conference, Senator Clinton strongly affirmed that the U.S. stands "with Israel because it is a beacon of democracy in a neighborhood that is shadowed by radicalism, extremism, despotism and terrorism," and that Israel's very existence is "a defiant rebuke to anti-Semitism." Her full remarks are available at <http://www.pjvoice.com/v24/24301clinton.aspx>.

**Israel, Senator Clinton has said,** "is not only a friend and ally for us; it is a beacon of what democracy can and should be." [Senator Hillary Clinton, Address to AIPAC, 2/1/07]

## **SENATOR JOHN EDWARDS**

**As a U.S. Senator, John Edwards had an outstanding voting record on issues related to the U.S.-Israel relationship.** He co-sponsored pro-Israel legislation, including the Syria Accountability Act. He also co-sponsored several pro-Israel resolutions, including a resolution expressing congressional opposition to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state. He also signed on to several pro-Israel letters, including a letter urging Vice President Cheney not to

meet with Yassir Arafat until Arafat took appropriate steps to stem the violence. Senator Edwards repeatedly supported foreign aid.

**Edwards speaks eloquently about his affection for the Jewish state and about the threats to her safety and security.** His remarks at NJDC's 2007 Washington Conference were particularly passionate. An excerpt:

*I know how important our relationship with Israel is.*

*I have been on extraordinarily emotional trips to Israel myself which have been very important to me. Tonight as many of you know in Israel a flag will be raised on Mt. Herzl to commemorate what happened in 1948 when members of Israel's provisional government signed a declaration of independence in Tel Aviv and celebrating Israel's independence is a wonderful historic moment for Israel. The nation is flourishing, the economy is doing very well. Israel continues to face, as many of you know very well, extraordinary threats to her people and security every single day.*

*I think there is a renewed need for vigilance. I was in Israel last summer --- in fact a few of the people who I was in Israel with are here tonight. We met with the Prime Minister, other Israeli leaders, and the Cabinet. We travelled to the northern border with Lebanon. This was about a month before the fighting broke out. This was one of my visits to Israel, all of which have had independent meaning for me.*

*On my first trip, we left the King David Hotel and left for Tel Aviv, and a few hours later the Sbarro Pizza bombing took place, which many of you will remember. Many died, including children.*

The full remarks are available at: <http://www.pjvoice.com/v24/24301edwards.aspx>

**Edwards' position paper on Israel strongly states:** "The U.S. must do everything it can, through diplomatic, economic, and military aid, to maintain Israel's qualitative edge and keep Israel strong and safe in a dangerous region. America must always stand by our friend, the only democracy in the region, and take measures to strengthen its vibrant economy."

**Edwards participated in the Herzliya Conference in Israel, where he warned about the dangers of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons.** "[F]or years, the U.S. hasn't done enough to deal with what I have seen as a threat from Iran" and "to ensure that Iran never gets nuclear weapons, we need to keep ALL options on the table. Let me reiterate – ALL options must remain on the table," he told the conference. [*Jerusalem Post*, January 22, 2007: <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1167467790614&pagename=JPost%2FJPostArticle%2FShowFull.>]

**On the campaign trail, Senator Edwards has sharply criticized the Bush Administration for proposing a \$20 billion weapons sale to Saudi Arabia and other Arab states and has pledged to take a tougher stance toward the Saudis than President Bush in the White House.** He was a sharp critic of the Saudi government on the 2004 campaign trail as well,

remarking, "Whether it's Iraq or terrorism, the Saudis have fallen way short of what they need to be doing." [Associated Press, 8/1/2007:

[http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2007-07-31-edwards-saudis\\_N.htm?csp=34](http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2007-07-31-edwards-saudis_N.htm?csp=34)]

Senator Edwards was very clear about his commitment to Israel during his 2004 debate with Vice President Cheney, declaring, "the Israeli people not only have the right to defend themselves, they should defend themselves. They have an obligation to defend themselves." He also reiterated his support for a tougher policy on Saudi Arabia and tough efforts to hold Iran accountable: "And I might add, it is very important for America to crack down on the Saudis who have not had a public prosecution for financing terrorism since 9/11. And it's important for America to confront the situation in Iran, because Iran is an enormous threat to Israel and to the Israeli people."

**A right wing smear campaign aimed at Edwards is false.** Some right wingers tried to claim that Edwards considers Israel the greatest threat to world peace. This is false, and the Edwards campaign responded firmly: "Senator Edwards did not say nor does he believe that the greatest short-term threat to world peace is the possibility that Israel would bomb Iran's nuclear facilities. Senator Edwards said, as he has in the past, that Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon is one of the greatest short-term threats to world peace."

## **SENATOR BARACK OBAMA**

**Senator Obama has an outstanding voting record on Israel issues.** Senator Obama co-sponsored the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act. He has joined several letters urging actions on behalf of the interests of the State of Israel, including a letter calling on the European Union to add Hezbollah to its list of terrorist groups, a letter urging President Bush to press Palestinian leadership to bar terrorist groups from Palestinian elections and a letter expressing solidarity with Israel in its fight against terrorism. He has voted multiple times in favor of foreign aid and is a leader in pushing for divestment from Iran.

**On January 22, 2008, Obama sent a letter from his U.S. Senate office to the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations calling for the U.S. to strongly support Israel on the U.N. Security Council.** An excerpt:

*I urge you to ensure that the Security Council issue no statement and pass no resolution on this matter that does not fully condemn the rocket assault Hamas has been conducting on civilians in southern Israel for over two years.*

*All of us are concerned about the impact of closed border crossings on Palestinian families. However, we have to understand why Israel is forced to do this. Gaza is governed by Hamas, which is a terrorist organization sworn to Israel's destruction, and Israeli civilians are being bombarded by rockets on an almost daily basis. That is unacceptable and Israel has a right to respond while seeking to minimize any impact on civilians.*

*The Security Council 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. If it cannot bring itself to make these common sense points, I urge you to ensure that it does not speak at all.*

[Letter from U.S. Senator Barack Obama to Dr. Zalmay Khalilzad, January 22, 2008]

**Obama wrote legislation promoting divestment from Iran.** The legislation would clear the way for more states to divest their pension funds from companies that support Iran's oil and gas industry. Iran uses the revenue it generates from its energy sector to finance its pursuit of nuclear weapons and support for terrorist groups. The legislation, according to the Senator's office, "once enacted, will provide needed information about which companies are supporting Iran's energy industry, clarify that state and local governments have the authority to divest of such companies, and provide legal protection for those governments that wish to do so." The legislation is being held up in the Senate by a Republican Senator. [NJDC Blog, 8/1/07: [http://njdc.typepad.com/njdcs\\_blog/2007/08/obama-pushes-le.html](http://njdc.typepad.com/njdcs_blog/2007/08/obama-pushes-le.html)]

**Obama is outspoken about the dangers of Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons.** For example, in November 2007, he stated firmly: "Make no mistake – if the Iranians and Syrians think they can use Iraq as another Afghanistan or a staging area from which to attack Israel or other countries, they are badly mistaken." [*Chicago Sun Times*, 3/1/07: <http://www.suntimes.com/news/sweet/278222,CST-EDT-sweet01.article>]

**Senator Obama spoke eloquently about his support for the U.S.-Israel relationship at the 2007 NJDC Washington Conference.** An excerpt:

*When I am President, the United States will stand shoulder to shoulder with Israel in search of this peace, and in defense against those who seek its destruction ...*

*... Those who have worked with me in Chicago in the state Legislature and now in the United States Senate will testify that I have not just talked the talk, I have walked the walk when it comes to Israel's security. I think it is fundamental. I think it is something that is in the interests of the United States because of our special relationship, because Israel has not only established a democracy in the region but has been a stalwart ally of ours ...*

For the full address: <http://www.pjvoice.com/v25/25304obama.aspx>

**To an AIPAC audience in Chicago on March 2, 2007, Obama said, "Our job is to renew the United States' efforts to help Israel achieve peace with its neighbors while remaining vigilant against those who do not share this vision... That effort begins with a clear and strong commitment to the security of Israel: our strongest ally in the region and its only established democracy. That will always be my starting point."** Continued Obama, "And when we see all of the growing threats in the region: from Iran to Iraq to the resurgence of al-Qaeda to the reinvigoration of Hamas and Hezbollah, that loyalty and that friendship will guide

me as we begin to lay the stones that will build the road that takes us from the current instability to lasting peace and security.” [Address of Senator Barack Obama to AIPAC, 3/2/07]

The *New York Sun* – hardly a bastion of support for Democrats – editorialized: “We're no shills for Mr. Obama, but these Republicans [who questioned the Senator's support for Israel] haven't checked their facts. At least by our lights, Mr. Obama's commitment to Israel, as he has articulated it so far in his campaign, is quite moving and a tribute to the broad, bipartisan support that the Jewish state has in America.” [*New York Sun*, 1/9/08: <http://www.nysun.com/article/69154>]

**Rep. Robert Wexler – a strong supporter of Israel who endorsed Obama – wrote, “What has always struck me about Senator Obama – and this is one of the reasons I have endorsed his candidacy for the United States Presidency – is that a love for Israel and a desire to keep the Jewish people secure is evident not just in his work, but also in his heart.”** [Letter of endorsement from Rep. Wexler]