



Dear Steve:

They are at it again. You may have already received a few bogus emails making false claims about Senators Clinton, Obama and Edwards. The Right Wing Smear Machine is back, and they are starting early, hoping to use the Big Lie to undermine the eventual Democratic nominee.

In 2004, as you will recall, right wingers spread lies about Democratic nominee John Kerry. They lied about his outstanding service in Vietnam and started a word-of-mouth campaign in the Jewish community with a lie about his wife supporting Hamas. Likewise, the amount of misinformation the Right Wing spread about President Clinton and Vice President Gore is almost too numerous to recount.

This year, NJDC is determined to give our activists the tools to fight back – and to fight back early. In this email, I have enclosed information that counters some specific charges that have been levied against Senators Obama, Edwards and Clinton. **Please help us make it "viral" by forwarding it to friends, family, neighbors and colleagues.**

In the coming days, NJDC will send around a printable fact-sheet on where the major Democratic candidates stand on Middle East issues.

Senator Obama

We have received several reports about dishonest emails circulating about Senator Obama, aimed at Jewish voters. The fact of the matter is, Senator Obama is a good friend of the Jewish Community. He is very popular in the Chicago Jewish Community (one of the most vibrant centers of Jewish life in the nation) and has made courting Jewish votes a priority in his presidential campaign. A recent profile about Senator Obama in the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* explained: *"What you might not hear is that the Illinois senator, who made history Thursday by winning the Democratic caucus in Iowa, has made Jewish leaders an early stop at every stage in his political career."* (Click [here](#) for the full article.)

Some of the viral emails sent out about Obama claim that the Senator is anti-Israel. Such charges are off-base. Like the other Democratic candidates, Barack Obama is a strong supporter of the U.S.-Israel relationship. He has never cast a vote against the position of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). Shmuel Rosner,

the U.S. correspondent for the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* writes that Senator Obama *"is pro-Israel. Period."* (Click [here](#) to read his entire blog post about Obama.)

Senator Obama told the audience at NJDC's 2007 Washington Conference, *"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."* (Click [here](#) for a transcript and [here](#) for video.) Likewise, in March 2007, Senator Obama told an AIPAC audience in Chicago that he believes the U.S. must have *"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"* in approaching Middle East policy. 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."*

Senator Obama has been endorsed by several prominent supporters of Israel, including Jewish Congressman Robert Wexler of Florida, who 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."* Another prominent supporter of Israel, distinguished financier Lester Crown, wrote: *"As president, [Obama] will be the friend to Israel that we all want to see in the White House - stalwart in his defense of Israel's security, and committed to helping Israel achieve peace with its neighbors."* (More coverage of Crown's endorsement and support for Obama in the Jewish community is available on the *Haaretz* blog, [here](#).)

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."*

It is also worth noting that Senator Obama is an outspoken critic of Iran, who wrote legislation to make it easier for states to divest from Iranian holdings. (The legislation is being blocked by a Republican Senator.)

Another Republican smear campaign falsely claims Senator Obama was educated in a radical Muslim madrassa – a blatant lie. While Senator Obama's religion – he is Christian – should not matter in the Presidential election, setting the facts straight is important. We've seen terrible fear mongering by the right wing in the form of baseless attacks against Muslim Congressman Keith Ellison – a good public servant and a friend of Israel and the Jewish Community. Similar attacks seem to be sprouting up against Senator Obama although he is Christian.

If a friend or neighbor asks you about an email or internet rumor

regarding Senator Obama's religious upbringing, here are some important things to tell him/her:

(1) CNN reports *"Allegations that Sen. Barack Obama was educated in a radical Muslim school known as a 'madrassa' are not accurate, according to CNN reporting."* The complete report is available online here in a report entitled "CNN debunks false report about Obama."

(2) The false "madrassa" rumors were published in a right wing smear magazine owned by the same company that owns the ultra-conservative *Washington Times*. These are the same people who have printed numerous falsehoods about the Clintons through the years.

(3) The Obama campaign has a fact sheet on its website which serves as an excellent resource about his background and sets the record straight about his religion. While Obama's religion should not be a political issue, lying about a candidate's religion is noteworthy. The fact sheet explains that, despite lies saying otherwise, Obama *"is not and has never been a Muslim."* The fact sheet is available [here](#).

Scurrilous emails have also been circulating which attempt to smear Senator Obama because a magazine associated with his church gave an award to Louis Farrakhan. In the response to inquiries about Farrakhan, Obama repudiated and decried Farrakhan and his anti-Semitism. He was praised by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) for so-doing.

ADL National Director Abraham Foxman released a statement saying: *"We welcome Barack Obama's condemnation of the anti-Semitic rhetoric of Minister Louis Farrakhan, and his making clear that he did not agree with his church's decision to honor Farrakhan. Issues of racism and anti-Semitism must be beyond the bounds of politics. When someone close to a political figure shows sympathy and support for an individual who makes his name espousing bigotry, that political figure needs to distance himself from that decision. Senator Obama has done just that."*

Newsweek debunked other falsehoods about Senator Obama's church, in an article posted at:

<http://www.newsweek.com/id/91424/output/print>

The rhetoric in some of these viral emails about Obama is so over the top, that yesterday several leaders of national Jewish organizations signed on to a letter condemning the smear campaign being run against him. The signatories represent non-partisan organizations which do not endorse political candidates. In the letter, they wrote: *"Of particular concern, over the past several weeks, many in our community have received hateful emails that use falsehood and innuendo to mischaracterize Senator Barack Obama's religious beliefs and who he is as a person" and "These tactics attempt to drive a wedge between our community and a presidential candidate based on despicable and false attacks and innuendo based on religion. We reject these efforts to manipulate members of our community into supporting or opposing candidates."*

The signatories include William Daroff of United Jewish Communities,

Nathan J. Diament of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, Abraham Foxman of Anti-Defamation League, Richard S. Gordon of the American Jewish Congress, David Harris of the American Jewish Committee, Rabbi Marvin Hier of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Rabbi David Saperstein of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, Phyllis Snyder of the National Council of Jewish Women and Hadar Susskind of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

The letter can be viewed [here](#).

Senator Clinton

Senator Hillary Clinton has long been a target for distortion, despite her outstanding record on issues ranging from education, to health care, to support for Israel. Despite her strong commitment to Israel and close kinship with the Jewish Community (a key reason she is tremendously popular with her New York constituents), right wing smears against her leadership continue.

Giuliani advisor Martin Kramer, for instance, wrote a disingenuous piece in the *Jerusalem Post* claiming that Senator Clinton's rhetoric on Israel contains code words hinting that she is not really a true friend of Israel. Of course there was no logic to anything he wrote, not a surprise given that Senator Clinton has worked overtime in support of Israel in the Senate.

I wrote an op-ed responding to Mr. Kramer, which is available on our blog, [here](#). I would recommend sending these paragraphs to anyone who is tempted to believe a right wing smear of the Senator and her support for the Jewish state:

Before delving into the specific charges offered by Kramer, it is important to note that Senator Clinton has been a great supporter of Israel throughout her career, and is one of Israel's strongest friends in the US Senate. She led the charge for Red Cross recognition of Magen David Adom and has an impeccable voting record.

If Hillary were but a fair weather friend of Israel, as Kramer suggests, she surely would not enjoy the immense popularity she has seen in New York. One simply does not get re-elected in the Empire State with 67% of the vote if there is even a smidgeon of legitimate doubt about one's support for Israel.

Here is what 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."

At NJDC's 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 remarks were particularly well received by our members. (Click [here](#) for a transcript and [here](#) for video.)

The Senator's Israel position paper states, *"from her first trip to Israel on New Year's Day in 1982 through her years as a U.S. Senator, Hillary Clinton has a long history of strong and steadfast leadership for the US-Israel relationship. Her connection to the State of Israel, which began when as the First Lady of Arkansas, she brought an innovative Israeli preschool education program to her state, has grown."* It goes on to say that *"Hillary recognizes that Israel is a most important strategic ally against the scourge of terrorism and radicalism. 'Israel,' she said, 'is not only a friend and ally for us; it is a beacon of what democracy can and should be.'"*

Time and again, Senator Clinton comes forward to stand with Israel. In September, for instance, Senator Clinton voiced strong and eloquent support of Israel's decision to take out a Syrian weapons facility in September, asserting that *"the Syrians apparently were putting together, and perhaps over some period of years, a nuclear facility, and the Israelis took it out,"* adding, *"I strongly support that."*

In a further example, Senator Clinton's office teamed with Palestinian Media Watch in February 2007 to release a study of anti-Israel language in Palestinian textbooks. Bold actions in support of Israel are the rule from Senator Clinton's office, not the exception.

And, as was previously alluded to, Senator Clinton was a leader in the successful efforts to push for recognition of Magen David Adom (Israel's Red Cross) into the International Red Cross movement, leading American Red Cross Chairwoman Bonnie McElveen-Hunter to comment: *"In partnership with the American Red Cross, Senator Clinton has been a strong and engaged leader in support of Magen David Adom's acceptance into the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement."*

Of course, it is important to remind anyone tempted to believe the right wing's rhetoric about Senator Clinton that her husband's administration was strongly supportive of Israel. To this day, former President Clinton continues to speak out on behalf of the U.S.-Israel relationship, notably taking former President Jimmy Carter to task for falsehoods in his book about the Middle East.

Senator Edwards

Right wingers have long sought to distort Senator Edwards' record. Last year, the right wing smear machine tried to spread a myth—strongly denied by the Edwards campaign—that claimed the Senator considered Israel the greatest threat to world peace. The Edwards campaign struck back hard, issuing a statement which NJDC blogged about in February. (Click [here](#) to view.) The statement said:

"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."

Edwards spoke eloquently about the Iranian threat to the Herzliya conference in Israel. During the conference he *remarked that "for years, the U.S. hasn't done enough to deal with what I have seen as a threat from Iran" and that "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."*

Addressing Herzliya, Edwards said that the U.S.-Israel relationship is a *"bond that can never be broken."* He also spoke about his dedication to Israel at NJDC's Washington Conference. (Click [here](#) for video and [here](#) for a transcript.) One need just read this portion of his remarks to understand that this man loves Israel, understands her challenges and stands firmly with her people:

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.

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."* (More info is available in a *USA Today* article, which is available [here](#).)

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."*

Attacks against our Democratic candidates must be countered with the facts. The earlier we start, the more powerful our pushback. I urge you to forward this message along to voters of all parties and political persuasions so we can stop the saliency of right wing attacks before it is too late. And, please send us any smear emails aimed at Jewish voters you receive so we can help debunk them.

Sincerely,



Ira N. Forman
Executive Director
National Jewish Democratic Council

PS. Please consider making a financial contribution to NJDC. Click [here](#) to contribute. And, click [here](#) to visit our blog!


