

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HR 1447 Nation of Israel
SPONSOR(S): Plakon
TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SR 1396

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Federal Affairs Subcommittee		Bennett	Camechis
2) State Affairs Committee			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

This resolution resolves that the members of the Florida House of Representatives commend Israel for its cordial and mutually beneficial relationship with the United States and with the State of Florida and support Israel in its legal, historical, moral, and God-given right of self-governance and self-defense upon the entirety of its own lands, recognizing that Israel is neither an attacking force nor an occupier of the lands of others, and that peace can be afforded the region only through a whole and united Israel governed under one law for all people.

Israel declared its Independence on May 14, 1948. On that same day, the President of the United States recognized the provisional government as the de facto authority of the new State of Israel. Since then, the relationship between the U.S. and Israel has been a cornerstone of U.S. policy in the Middle East. The two nations have developed a close alliance based on common democratic values, religious affinities, and security interests. These relations have evolved through legislation; memoranda of understanding; economic, scientific, military agreements; and trade. The U.S. demonstrates its commitment to Israel's security and well-being through continued economic and security assistance.

This resolution has no fiscal impact.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Effect of Proposed Changes

This resolution resolves that the members of the Florida House of Representatives commend Israel for its cordial and mutually beneficial relationship with the United States and with the State of Florida and support Israel in its legal, historical, moral, and God-given right of self-governance and self-defense upon the entirety of its own lands, recognizing that Israel is neither an attacking force nor an occupier of the lands of others, and that peace can be afforded the region only through a whole and united Israel governed under one law for all people.

Present Situation

History

The birthplace of the Jewish people is the Land of Israel. There, a significant part of the nation's long history was enacted, of which the first thousand years are recorded in the Bible; there, its cultural, religious, and national identity was formed; and there, its physical presence has been maintained through the centuries, even after the majority was forced into exile. During the many years of dispersion, the Jewish people never severed its bond with Israel. With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Jewish independence, lost 2,000 years earlier, was renewed.¹

The State of Israel proclaimed its independence on May 14, 1948. Subsequent to Israel's declaration of independence, a state of hostility has existed, varying in degree and intensity, between Israel and its neighboring Arab countries: Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Peace treaties between Israel and neighbors Egypt and Jordan were reached in 1977 and 1994, respectively, but there are currently no peace treaties between Israel and Syria or Lebanon. Israel has given high priority to gaining wide acceptance as a sovereign state with an important international role, and today Israel has diplomatic relations with 163 states.²

Relations with the United States

On the date of its independence, President Harry Truman issued a signed press release stating that, "This Government has been informed that a Jewish state has been proclaimed in Palestine, and recognition has been requested by the provisional Government thereof. The United States recognizes the provisional government as the de facto authority of the new State of Israel."³ Since that time, the U.S. and Israel have developed a close alliance, based on common democratic values, religious affinities, and security interests.⁴ Relations have evolved through legislation; memoranda of understanding; economic, scientific, military agreements; and trade. The relationship between the U.S. and Israel has been a cornerstone of U.S. policy in the Middle East, and the U.S. commitment to Israel's security and well-being is demonstrated by its continued economic and security assistance to Israel.

¹ Information in this paragraph was obtained from the website of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, located at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts+About+Israel/History/Facts+about+Israel+History.htm>.

² Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Background Note: Israel, December 1, 2011. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3581.htm>

³ Press Release: Recognition of Israel, President, Harry S. Truman. Available at: <http://www.archives.gov/global-pages/larger-image.html?i=/education/lessons/us-israel/images/recognition-press-release-1.jpg&c=/education/lessons/us-israel/images/recognition-press-release.caption.html>

⁴ Congressional Research Service, *Israel: Background and U.S. Relations*, at 22 (February 14, 2011; RL33576) by Casey L. Addis.

Peace Process

The U.S. has been the principal international proponent of the Arab-Israeli peace process since President Jimmy Carter mediated the Israeli-Egyptian talks at Camp David, which resulted in the 1979 peace treaty between the two nations. President George H.W. Bush and President Clinton helped facilitate a series of agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty of 1994. In the 2000's, both President George W. Bush and current President Barack Obama attempted to advance the peace process, but the administrations were unable to reach material progress in peace talks between Israel and Syria, Lebanon, or the Palestinians.⁵ President Obama has continued to encourage and negotiate the peace process between Israel and its Arab neighbors.⁶

Trade and Defense

The U.S. and Israel signed a free trade agreement (FTA) in 1985 that, over the next 10 years, progressively eliminated tariffs on most goods traded between the two countries. A subsequent trade accord was signed in November 1996 and addressed the remaining goods not covered in the 1985 FTA, but some trade barriers remain in the agricultural sector. The U.S. is currently Israel's largest single trading partner, accumulating \$22.3 billion in bilateral trade in 2009.⁷

In 1983, the U.S. and Israel established the Joint Political Military Group, which meets twice a year. Both the U.S. and Israel participate in military planning and combined exercises, and have collaborated on military research and weapons development. In 2009, U.S. military aid to Israel totaled \$2.55 billion; this has increased to \$3 billion in 2012, and will total \$3.15 billion per year from 2013 to 2018.⁸

Other Bilateral Relations

In addition to the bilateral relations described above, the U.S. and Israel have worked together on: "bilateral science and technology efforts (including the Binational Science Foundation and the Binational Agricultural Research and Development Foundation); the U.S.-Israeli Education Foundation, which sponsors educational and cultural programs; the Joint Economic Development Group, which maintains a high-level dialogue on economic issues; the Joint Counterterrorism Group, designed to enhance cooperation in fighting terrorism; and a high-level Strategic Dialogue."⁹

Relationship with Florida

Previous Legislative Resolutions

In the recent past, the Florida Legislature has approved various resolutions regarding Israel, including:

- In 2003, the Florida Legislature adopted without objection HR 9021, by Representative Hasner and others, expressing solidarity with Israel in its fight against terrorism.
- In 2006, the Legislature unanimously adopted HR 1637 by Representative Gelber and others, reiterating its abhorrence of terrorism and reaffirming its affinity with and support of the people and State of Israel.
- In 2008, the Legislature unanimously adopted HR 9081, by Representative Hasner and others, recognizing the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel's independence.
- In 2009, the Legislature unanimously adopted HR 1A by Representative Hasner and HR 66-A by Senator Deutch, expressing solidarity with Israel in its defense against terrorism in the Gaza Strip.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Obama promises to consult Jordan on Israeli-Palestinian peace talk issues*, by Avi Issacharoff and Natasha Mozgovaya, January 18th, 2012. Available at: <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/obama-promises-to-consult-jordan-on-israeli-palestinian-peace-talk-issues-1.407872>

⁷ See Background Note: Israel, *supra* note 1.

⁸ See Background Note: Israel, *supra* note 1.

⁹ *Id.*

The Florida Legislature created several linkage institutes in s. 288.8175, F.S., including the Florida-Israel Institute, which is jointly administered by Florida Atlantic University and Broward College.

According to the statute, the primary purpose of linkage institutes is to assist in the development of stronger economic, cultural, educational, and social ties between this state and strategic foreign countries through the promotion of expanded public and private dialogue on cooperative research and technical assistance activities, increased bilateral commerce, student and faculty exchange, cultural exchange, and the enhancement of language training skills between the postsecondary institutions in this state and those of selected foreign countries.

As required by statute, each linkage institute is governed by an agreement between the Board of Governors of the State University System for a state university and the State Board of Education for a community college with the counterpart organization in a foreign country. Each institute must report to the Department of Education (DOE) regarding its program activities, expenditures, and policies, and must ensure that minority students are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in the exchange programs. A linkage institute may not be created or funded except upon the recommendation of the DOE and except by amendment to s. 288.8175, F.S.

Each institute may offer up to 25 full-time scholarships to students per year from the host countries to study in any of the state universities or community colleges in this state as resident students. The institute directors develop criteria, to be approved by the DOE, for the selection of these students. Students must return home within 3 years after their tenure of graduate or undergraduate study for a length of time equal to their exemption period.

According to the Florida-Israel Institute, its primary purpose "is achieved through the formation of cooperative initiatives in research, academic development, student and faculty exchange, cultural exchange, and technical assistance between Florida and Israeli institutions of higher learning as well as private sector commercial endeavors. The Institute acts as a facilitator forging collaborative efforts between Israel's world renowned academic institutions and Israel's highly innovative hi-tech industry with Florida's higher-education institutions and Florida industry in areas essential to both states. Two groups assist FII in carrying out its mission: an all-purpose advisory committee consisting of members from academics, government and private industry; and a faculty committee that focuses exclusively on the academic activities of FII."¹⁰ The Florida-Israel Institute offers 25 full-time scholarships each semester to Israeli students, asserting that it is the only program of its kind in the United States.¹¹

B. SECTION DIRECTORY: Not applicable.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues: None.
2. Expenditures: None.

¹⁰ Florida-Israel Institute website at <http://www.floridaisrael.org/>.

¹¹ *Id.*

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues: None.
2. Expenditures: None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR: None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS: None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision: Not applicable.
2. Other: None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY: Not applicable.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS: None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

Not applicable.