

## Israel Heartland Caucus - Mission & Background



### **Mission**

The mission of the Israel Heartland Caucus (IHC) is to pursue policy with regard to Israel's Biblical Heartland that is in line with American interests and values, that stands firmly with our ally Israel and against the anti-Jewish discrimination that has become a norm in international political discourse with regards to this territory. IHC will be a voice for the millions of Americans for whom the Israeli Heartland and the issues relating to it are important, such as: protecting access to and integrity of Biblical holy sites currently being abused by the PA; protecting US national security interests through a politically stable Heartland, which is key to the Jewish State's security and, consequently, the stability of the greater Middle East; preventing the transformation of the Israeli heartland into a state hostile to the US and Israel that would ally with Iran, Syria and North Korea; exploring alternatives to the Oslo two-state concept; and promoting United States economic interests in Israel's heartland.

The caucus will host educational events such as monthly briefings and receptions; provide a forum to debate and discuss the issues both among members as well as with government officials from relevant agencies; champion policy initiatives that are in line with the caucus's values; and provide a platform and opportunities for members to connect with their constituents who support the Israeli Heartland.

### **Why is this unique**

This caucus is unique because it is the first time an official political group in the US government is pursuing a policy in Judea and Samaria (the 'West Bank') which is not built around the two state concept, or the idea that the territory needs to be handed over to an Arab entity. In essence this caucus is saying that the territory is and should remain under Israeli control because that is the American interest here.

There exist other Israel caucuses in the US Congress (e.g.- the Democrat Israel Working Group, Israel Allies Caucus, Republican Israel Caucus, and Israel Victory Caucus), however, none focus on Israel's Heartland, and in fact, they stay away from it due to its controversial nature.

### **Why Now**

There has been a growing sense in Congress, especially among Republicans, that the current two state concept policy is misguided, but there has not been an open dialogue about alternatives. Absent a platform to consider/pursue alternatives, there hasn't been a concerted effort by members of Congress to say that the two state solution is wrong or that a different policy should be pursued. The Trump Administration has facilitated the rethinking of many policies and the questioning of conventional wisdom, and in that light, this caucus will be instrumental with regards to policy affecting Judea and Samaria, Israel's Heartland.

## **Vision, Values, Issues and Activities**

### **Vision**

The mission of the Israel Heartland Congressional Caucus is to be an active voice in advocating and pursuing a US policy towards Israel's Biblical Heartland (Judea & Samaria, aka, "the West Bank") which is guided by the values delineated below.

### **Values**

The Israel Heartland Congressional Caucus will show solidarity with the millions of Americans for whom Israel's heartland is important:

1. Who recognize the significance of Biblical holy sites in Israel's heartland and want to see access to them protected;
2. Who understand that the security of Israel's heartland is a key US interest to ensure both the Jewish State's security, and stability in the greater Middle East;
3. Who don't want their taxpayer dollars funding terrorism;
4. Who don't want to see the Israeli heartland become another state hostile to the US and Israel that would ally with Iran, Syria and North Korea;
5. Who believe that alternatives to the Oslo two-state concept should be explored.

Furthermore, the Israel Heartland Caucus shows solidarity with:

1. The over 1-in-10 Israelis who live in the Israeli heartland;
2. The Christian Arabs who are persecuted by, and whose children are forced to be educated as Muslims by, the Palestinian Authority;
3. The Muslim Arabs being denied basic human rights by the Palestinian Authority.

### **Issues**

A manifestation of the above values would include addressing the following issues, among others:

1. Promoting United States business interests in Israel's heartland;
2. Promoting security, liberty, and upward mobility for all residents;
3. Exploring new pathways to achieving regional stability;
4. Combatting efforts to perpetuate the Arab-Israeli conflict, including: the BDS movement, jihadist indoctrination, revisionist history, and international efforts to delegitimize Israel.

### **Activities of the Caucus**

1. Provide a forum for debate and discussion of the issues;
2. Bring in experts for monthly briefings;
3. Strengthen US-Israel Heartland ties via legislation and/or Executive Branch initiatives;
4. Ensure that members of the caucus are visible in the media and with relevant political organizations to champion the caucus' issues;
5. Create a channel for inter-parliamentary communication and cooperation between the US Congress and the Israel Knesset.

*The Israel Heartland Congressional Caucus is a nonpartisan caucus, open to all members who support the above values.*

### *Defining the Biblical Heartland*

*The “Biblical heartland” refers to the mountain range known historically as Judea and Samaria, and since 1949 as “the West Bank”. 80 percent of the stories of the Jewish Bible take place in this region, and in the center of it is the city of Jerusalem. The land mass is 2,173 square miles (less than ¼ the size of the State of New Jersey). The territory is bounded by the Jordan River to the East, the 1949 ceasefire line to the west, the town of Susya to the South, and the town of Shechem (Nablus) to the North. Judea is the southern portion of the mountain range, and Samaria is the northern portion. The mountain range overlooks and controls Israel’s coastal plain, including a 40 by 10 mile rectangle that contains 60% of Israel’s population, 80% of Israel’s GDP, and Israel’s only major international airport. The mountain range ends in steep cliffs to the east, creating a natural boundary with neighboring Jordan. The territory includes, from South to North, the following Biblical cities, among others: Hebron, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Beth El, Shiloh, and Shehem (Nablus).*