



President Obama: Standing for Shared Jewish and Democratic Values

President Barack Obama addressed the Union for Reform Judaism's Biennial conference and emphasized to the thousands of attendees that the American Jewish community has an ally in the White House.

Obama spoke about the values shared between most American Jews and the Democratic Party, including social justice issues, progressive policy reforms, and support for a secure Jewish state of Israel.

Excerpts from Obama's speech appear below and his full address can be [viewed here](#).

Obama remarked on the values and partnership shared between the American Jewish community and the Democratic Party:

[T]he Jewish community has always understood that the dream we share is about more than just doing well for yourself. From the moment our country was founded, American Jews have helped make our union more perfect. Your parents, your grandparents, your great-grandparents, they remembered what it was like to be a stranger, and as a result treated strangers with compassion. They pursued tikkun olam, the hard work of repairing the world.

They fought bigotry because they had experienced bigotry. They fought for freedom of religion because they understood what it meant to be persecuted for your religious beliefs. Our country is a better place because they did. The same values that bring you here today led Justice Brandeis to fight for an America that protects the least of these. ... They led Abraham Joshua Heschel to pray with his feet and march with Dr. King. And over the last three years, they have brought us together on the most important issues of our time....

I promise you that as you pray with your feet, I will be right there with you every step of the way. I'll be fighting to create jobs, and give small businesses a chance to succeed. I'll be fighting to invest in education and technology. I will fight to strengthen programs like Medicare and Social Security. I will fight to put more money in the pockets of working families. I won't be afraid to ask the most well-off among us -- Americans like me -- to pay our fair share, to make sure that everybody has got a shot. I will fight alongside you every inch of the way....

In this moment, every American, of every faith, every background has the opportunity to stand up and say: Here I am. Hineni. Here I am. I am ready to keep alive our country's promise. I am ready to speak up for our values at home and abroad. I am ready to do what needs to be done. The work may not be finished in a day, in a year, in a term, in a lifetime, but I'm ready to do my part.

And I believe that with tradition as our guide, we will seize that opportunity. And in the face of daunting odds, we will make the choices that are hard but are right. That's how we've overcome tougher times before. That's how we will overcome the challenges that we face today. And together, we will rewrite the next chapter in America's story and prove that our best days are still to come.

He cited several domestic reforms that he partnered with the Jewish community to achieve, including:

- * Health Care Reform, which expanded health insurance access to millions of Americans;
- * The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which ensures women receive equal pay for equal work;
- * Raising fuel efficiency standard as a start to achieving energy reform;
- * Repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" so all Americans can serve their country;
- * Initiating education reforms to improve America's schools; and
- * Appointing two female Supreme Court Justices who are committed to protecting First Amendment rights for all.

Obama emphasized his commitment to strengthening the U.S.-Israel relationship:

[Peace] begins with a strong and secure State of Israel. And the special bonds between our nations are ones that all Americans hold dear because they're bonds forged by common interests and shared values. They're bonds that transcend partisan politics -- or at least they should.

We stand with Israel as a Jewish democratic state because we know that Israel is born of firmly held values that we, as Americans, share: a culture committed to justice, a land that welcomes the weary, a people devoted to tikkun olam.

So America's commitment -- America's commitment and my commitment to Israel and Israel's security is unshakeable. It is unshakeable.

I said it in September at the United Nations. I said it when I stood amid the homes in Sderot that had been struck by missiles: No nation can tolerate terror. And no nation can accept rockets targeting innocent men, women and children. No nation can yield to suicide bombers.

And as [\[Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barack\]](#) has said, it is hard to remember a time when the United States has given stronger support to Israel on its security. In fact, I am proud to say that no U.S. administration has done more [in support of Israel's security than ours](#). None. Don't let anybody else tell you otherwise. It is a fact....

On my watch, the United States of America has led the way, from Durban to the United Nations, against attempts to use international forums to delegitimize Israel. And we will continue to do so. That's what friends and allies do for each other. So don't let anybody else tell a different story. We have been there, and we will continue to be there. Those are the facts.

He listed just some of the [many steps](#) he has taken to support Israel, including:

- * Providing "the [most funding](#) for Israel in history" in spite of domestic budgetary constraints;
- * Developing and funding the [Iron Dome](#) missile system that continues to save Israeli lives;
- * Standing up for Israel at the United Nations, including [working forcefully](#) against the Palestinians' unilateral statehood drive;
- * [Personally intervening](#) to rescue Israel's diplomats when its embassy in Cairo was attacked; and
- * Promptly giving Israel [whatever it needed](#) to fight the 2010 Carmel fire.

He also spoke about his efforts to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran and stated clearly that all options are on the table:

Another grave concern -- and a threat to the security of Israel, the United States and the world -- is Iran's nuclear program. And that's why our policy has been absolutely clear: We are determined to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. And that's why we've worked painstakingly from the moment I took office with allies and partners, and we have imposed the most comprehensive, the hardest-hitting sanctions that the Iranian regime has ever faced. We haven't just talked about it, we have done it. And we're going to keep up the pressure. And that's why, rest assured, we will take no options off the table. We have been clear.