



**MEDIA ADVISORY**

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## **NEW AMERICAN POLITICAL VOICE ON ISRAEL LAUNCHES**

### **100 Distinguished Americans Establish J Street PAC and Lobby to Promote Security through Peace**

WASHINGTON— “For too long, the loudest ‘pro-Israel’ voices in this country have been those on the far-right,” says Jeremy Ben Ami, who today announced the launch of J Street—the first PAC with a corresponding lobby to give pro-peace, pro-Israel Americans a voice in American politics and in the policy process.

J Street will advocate in the political arena, in the media and in Congress that a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a comprehensive peace agreement between Israel and its neighbors are essential to the security and national interests of Israel, the United States and the broader Middle East.

“The term ‘pro-Israel’ has been hijacked by those who hold views that a majority of Americans—Jews and non-Jews alike—oppose, whether supporting the war in Iraq, beating the drums for war with Iran or putting obstacles in the path to ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” said Ben Ami, a former senior White House staff member in the Clinton administration and Policy Director for Howard Dean’s presidential campaign. “It is time that mainstream, pro-Israel Americans made it clear that the single most pro-Israel thing any American politician or policy maker can do is help to bring about a two-state solution and a comprehensive peace agreement between Israel and her neighbors.”

J Street is backed by an advisory council of more than 100 former elected and government officials, prominent political donors, rabbis, organization heads, and academics. Among many others, it includes a former U.S. Senator and two former Members of Congress, three Nobel laureates, former DNC finance chair Alan Solomont, Democracy Alliance board members Deborah Sagner and Gail Furman, Jewish community leader Hannah Rosenthal, Corporation Counsel for the City of New York Victor A. Kovner, MoveOn’s executive director Eli Pariser and former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Sam Lewis. For a full list of the advisory council, go to [ [http://www.jstreet.org/supporters/advisory\\_council](http://www.jstreet.org/supporters/advisory_council) ].

“Negotiations facilitated by the United States have long proved the only successful means of achieving enduring peace for Israel and her neighbors, “ said advisory council member Sam Lewis, a former U.S. ambassador to Israel. “The rapidly closing window of opportunity for a viable, two-state solution makes it all the more pressing that we get our ducks in a row at home to do all that we can to bring an end to this conflict.”

This ground-breaking effort adds a political dimension to existing advocacy to change the direction of American policy in the Middle East and will help to broaden the public and policy debate in the U.S. about the Middle East through targeted political giving, lobbying and netroots activism. To mark its launch, J Street released a new video to introduce its multifaceted approach to the public, [<http://www.jstreet.org/>].

“There is already broad agreement among mainstream Americans who support and care about Israel, its neighbors and US interests in the region about what a peace deal with the Palestinians and with the broader Arab world will look like,” said advisory council member, Victor A. Kovner, former Corporation Counsel for the City of New York. “What we need now is to establish that there is political will to support strong American leadership in bringing real peace and real security to the region.”

The establishment of J Street was also welcomed by a group of more than 20 leading Israeli security officials, generals, diplomats and politicians, who stated in a letter: “We see in the creation of J Street, an expression of support for and commitment to the State of Israel and to a strong and enduring U.S.-Israel relationship.” Signers include former Speaker of the Knesset and Chairman of the Jewish Agency Avrum Burg, former Foreign Minister and Public Security Minister Shlomo Ben Ami, former Member of Knesset and Deputy Minister of Defense Dalia Rabin and former IDF Chief of Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak. To read the full text of the letter, and a list of all its signers, go to [<http://www.jstreet.org/page/israeli-supporters-list> ].

J Street aims to challenge conventional political wisdom that in order to ensure the support of the American Jewish community and its allies, candidates must only take hawkish, right-wing positions on Israel to prove their “pro-Israel” credentials.

“Most American elected officials and policy makers understand that substantive U.S. engagement in bringing about a negotiated resolution to Israel’s conflict with her neighbors is the right course of action for Israel and the United States,” said advisory council member, Alan Solomont, a former finance chair for the Democratic National Committee. “J Street will mobilize popular and financial support behind candidates willing to stand up for an agenda that is at once proactive, pro-peace, and pro-Israel, making it smart to do so not only in a policy way, but in a political one as well.”

In the 2008 election cycle, J Street’s PAC will endorse and raise funds for several congressional and senatorial candidates to demonstrate to candidates and elected officials that there is political and financial support for those willing to take strong “pro-Israel, pro-peace” positions. In addition to conventional fundraising methods, the PAC will also borrow a page from other successful netroots efforts in cultivating a large online list of Americans willing to make small contributions and take action to demonstrate the breadth of support for J Street’s agenda.

Through its lobby, J Street will demonstrate to members of Congress and their staff that there is a tremendous diversity of opinions about Israel among their existing donors and that the more conservative, established voices that claim to speak for the entire Jewish community actually do not accurately reflect the views of a large number of their existing donors.

While the majority of the advisory council is Jewish, J Street aims to represent all Americans, including Jews, who believe that the interests of Israel and the United States are best served by diplomacy and negotiation, rather than military confrontation. The make-up of the advisory council reflects the reality that many Americans look to the American Jewish community as a marker for what it means to be “pro-Israel.”

“For too long the ‘pro-Israel’ politics of the Jewish organizational world have lagged far behind the consensus of the people they claim to represent, the majority of whom believe that a negotiated two-state solution is in Israel’s best interest,” said advisory council member, Hannah Rosenthal, the former executive director of the Jewish Council on Public Affairs. “J Street represents a concrete opportunity for us to bridge that gap; it is a vehicle for expressing the belief shared by the majority of American Jews and Americans alike that to be pro-Israel is to advocate for vigorous American leadership role in bringing peace and real security to the Middle East.