

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 5, 2010

CONTACT: Amy Spitalnick
202.248.5868 (o) / 516.521.0128 (c)
amy@jstreet.org

PRO-ISRAEL, PRO-PEACE MOVEMENT LAUNCHES NATIONAL FIELD PROGRAM

Nearly 2,000 Attend J Street Local Kickoff Events Around The Country

Washington - J Street, the political voice of the pro-Israel, pro-peace movement, has set up shop in communities around the country, bringing together nearly 2,000 activists at 21 launch events on Thursday evening.

The group, which has sparked controversy and opened up debate in the Jewish community on how to best achieve a two-state solution and secure Israel's future as a Jewish, democratic homeland, launched **J Street Local**, its new national grassroots field program.

"Tonight, we open a new chapter in the struggle for tzedek v'shalom – justice and peace – in the Middle East," said J Street Executive Director Jeremy Ben-Ami in remarks simulcast around the country. "We're engaged in a struggle for the heart and soul of the Jewish people, over the type of country that Israel - as the national home of the Jewish people - will be, and about the application of our community's most basic values and principles to the real world politics of the 21st century."

J Street Local will both broaden and deepen the presence of the pro-Israel, pro-peace movement in communities across the country, engaging and mobilizing local activists in advocacy and programming.

"Our elected officials and local leaders need to know that there is strong support in our community for a pro-Israel, pro-peace American foreign policy," said J Street San Francisco Bay Area chair Molly Freeman, who saw 200 local activists attend Thursday's event. "This is an opportunity for us to come together and give voice to the many American Jews and other friends of Israel who, for too long, have felt alienated and unrepresented on this issue."

"We know that the best way to support Israel is to make sure that as many American Jews as possible are engaged in the conversation about how we secure its future as a Jewish democracy," said Jon Grabelle Herrmann, chair of J Street Philadelphia, which drew over 200 local activists to its launch event.

J Street NYC's event had an overflow crowd of more than 300 attendees. Over 260 people attended the J Street Boston launch, including representatives of four Congressional offices.

The new field program will enhance J Street's existing work in support of strong American leadership to end the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflicts peacefully and diplomatically, through two states and a regional, comprehensive peace.

“President Obama came into office promising to work tirelessly toward that objective from day one,” said Ben-Ami. “His administration early on made it clear that they’d had enough talking about talking. Well, Mr. President – with all due respect – we are going to hold you to that. We’re not going to be satisfied with simply ‘getting the parties back to the table.’ We’re looking for results - because time is running out.”

Ben-Ami’s full remarks are available here: <http://www.jstreet.org/blog/?p=833>

J Street, billed in a feature story by the *New York Times Magazine* as “The New Israel Lobby,” was founded in April 2008 to promote meaningful American leadership to end the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. Its new national grassroots program and field operations fall under the auspices of the J Street Education Fund, Inc, an educational nonprofit which educates targeted communities about the need for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, raises the visibility of a mainstream pro-peace, pro-Israel presence within the American Jewish community, and promotes open, dynamic and spirited conversation about how to best advance the interests and future of a democratic, Jewish Israel.

###