



## US-ISRAEL POSITION PAPER

**Teresa Leger Fernandez, Congressional Candidate (NM-03)**

### **Introduction and Historic Backdrop**

I believe in building thriving, healthy communities-- and that all people are entitled to membership in a safe, vibrant, and interconnected environment and culture. I also recognize the importance of home and homeland. The people, land, and culture of Northern New Mexico are part of me, and I believe that all people should have access to this connection to homeland. I have lived these beliefs in my 30 years of work building community in Northern New Mexico and promoting tribal sovereignty on behalf of Native American tribes. This lens and experience inform my position on the US-Israel relationship.


We must remember, so as to never repeat, the centuries of attacks, expulsions and attempted extermination of the Jewish people from the Roman Empire, Spain, Germany, Russia and beyond. Northern New Mexico was a refuge for Sefardim fleeing the Inquisition. Today we are enjoying an acknowledgement and reclaiming with pride of this Jewish heritage, religion and history in New Mexico. This historic acknowledgement fits within New Mexico's tradition of multiculturalism and religious tolerance forged out of the historic struggles led by the Pueblo revolt and its demand to preserve the Puebloan indigenous religion and culture. This historic victory for religious tolerance, I believe, set the backdrop for centuries of co-habitation of multiple religious traditions in the State.

### **The US-Israel Relationship**

In Congress, I will be a strong voice to ensure that the US-Israel relationship remains positive and productive. I deeply recognize, and have spent years advocating for, the importance of preserving both democratic principles and inclusive collective histories. Israel stands as a critical reminder of the need to recognize and elevate these principles and histories so as to ensure that we do not erase communities. A strong and secure Israel, as the only democracy and only unwavering US ally in a dangerous region of the world, is also critical for US national security.

### **Security Aid & Israel's Right to Self-Defense**

I believe, unequivocally, that Israel - like all nations and peoples - has a right to exist free from military or terrorist attacks. The Israeli people have the right to live their lives with peace, safety, and security. At the same time, Palestinians also have the right to live their lives with dignity and a future for their families.



It is critical that we continue to support Israel, and work to maintain and strengthen our relationship with Israel as a long-time ally and strategic partner in the region. Part of this support means working to help ensure that Israel is able to maintain its Qualitative Military Edge, as outlined by law. In Congress, I will support continued funding for the 10-year, \$38 billion Memorandum of Understanding to provide the necessary funding to support Israel's right and ability to defend the nearly 9 million Jews, Arabs and Christians living within its borders.

I fully support, and will be a strong voice for, continued US aid to Israel, as well as resumption of humanitarian and economic assistance to the Palestinian people. American aid and assistance is crucial for the humanitarian needs of the region and has played a key role in promoting peace, stability, and helping to facilitate cooperation among Israeli and Palestinian officials. The US has been an important leader and key provider of economic and humanitarian support for both peoples, and it is imperative that the US continue to uphold its responsibility to help foster Israeli security and facilitate a return to the peace process.

### **Two-State Solution**


I firmly believe that we must pursue a peace process that recognizes the right of Israel to self-determination and to exist as a Jewish state. I also recognize that the Palestinian people are entitled to a future that includes their ability to build thriving healthy communities. In these times of both global uncertainty and the alarming rise of anti-Semitism, I will always work to ensure that the US relationship with Israel remains strong and that we stand up to hate and division at home and abroad. In Congress, I will be a strong voice for peace, for the principle of finding common values and purpose, and for dignity for all.

In Congress, I will advocate for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and for the US to play a leadership role in helping to facilitate and support a peace process. For decades, the US has endorsed a two-state solution — and should continue to support ways in which a two-state solution can be pursued.

The only way a peace process will work is if we set the table for Israelis and Palestinians to come together and set the terms for peace themselves. They must decide what peace looks like, but I firmly believe that the US has a role to play in helping foster the conditions for a process that can lead to lasting stability.

Until that time, the US should remain committed to Israel's security.

### **Support for a Truly Comprehensive Approach to Iran**



I supported the idea of the JCPOA and its stated aim to curb Iran’s nuclear ambitions and help secure regional and international security. If Iran were to acquire nuclear weapons, Israel’s security, and the United States’ security, would be directly threatened -- and international peace and security also compromised. In Congress, I will be committed to bringing the United States back into the agreement, but would insist that we build upon the original agreement to make further progress towards effective international cooperation, complete dismantlement/denuclearization, and an end to Iran’s insidious funding of terrorism around the globe.

I will also be committed to ensuring that Congress does its part to ensure that adequate authorization safeguards are in place to prevent the President from unilaterally engaging in, or provoking, military conflict with or operations against Iran.

### **The Value of Collaboration and Partnerships Instead of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions**

I have always stood against movements that seek to foster division and contribute to anti-Semitism. I would have joined nearly 400 members of Congress this year in voting for House Resolution 246 that clearly defined and denounced the BDS movement. We must stay focused on America’s role in bringing both parties back to the negotiating table and on the core objective of creating the conditions for a productive peace process.

As a New Mexican, I am also very aware of the value of the US and Israel’s economic partnerships — including directly between Israel and New Mexico itself. In fact, Israel is one of New Mexico’s biggest trade partners, and a top export market for our state.

Israel and New Mexico also share similar challenges and opportunities when it comes to water and solar technology. Having worked on both clean water and renewable energy issues throughout my career, I plan to bring my background on these issues to Congress — and hope to be able to help foster cooperation between my state, our country, and Israel on these critical developments that could impact our entire climate and global community.