

JEWISH INSIDER

Elvin Dowling

Candidate for Florida 20th

1) What is the one policy issue or area that you are most passionate about?

I am most interested in the issue of poverty and crime and how they impact marginalized communities. As the Chairman of one of South Florida's largest food banks, and having grown up in one of the poorest neighborhoods in South Florida, I have seen firsthand how these two issues can weigh heavily on families and restrict their capacity to grow and prosper in this, the wealthiest country in the world. In recent years, I have been successful at raising millions of dollars to mentor at-risk youths who are impoverished and often lack opportunities to succeed due to their economic circumstances. Just as importantly, since the beginning fo the COVID-19 pandemic, I have worked to alleviate the anxiety and desperation experienced by those families that suddenly became food insecure, helping to provide more than 20 million pounds of free food to those struggling with economic hardship. As a member of Congress, I will seek to serve on the Committee on Agriculture, which deals specifically with the issue of food insecurity, with the hope of creating sustainable solutions to fight food insecurity both within the congressional district and the country.

2) Which organizations or leaders do you consult with for advice on policy? Are there any whose views particularly align with yours?

I am fortunate to have a number of leaders and experts that I can consult with on a wide variety of issues that impact both the nation and the district, including:

- **Rabbi Barry Silver, Former Florida State Representative**
- **Attorney Lia Gaines, Former President of the NAACP – West Palm Beach Branch**
- **Hon. Marc H. Morial – President & CEO of the National Urban League**
- **Alcee L. Hastings, II – Son of the late Congressman Alcee Hastings**

Please note that I while I respect their views and appreciate their advice and counsel, the decisions I make and positions I take on each issue are my own.

3) Recent statistics from the FBI indicate that Jews are the victims of more than half of all religiously motivated hate crimes in the U.S. This uptick in antisemitism coincides with a robust debate about the role of policing in American society, with some arguing for abolishing or defunding the police, while others advocate for limited reforms or

preserving the status quo. What is your position on police reform and — in light of that — how do you believe the government should address violent antisemitism?

As a Candidate for Florida's 20th Congressional District, I understand that the issue of public safety and personal security are of paramount concern to the communities for which I advocate. To that end, I support stronger working relationships between law enforcement agencies and these same communities we are all committed to serve, however, I believe that necessary reforms are in order, to help to restore trust between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. As a former Auxiliary Police Officer with the New York Police Department, I have seen firsthand the tremendous sacrifice that our law enforcement community makes every day to protect the general public. As an African American male, however, I have also experienced the heavy hand of the police for no other reason than the fact that I am Black. Even still, I am lucky. In fact, one out of every three Black men in America have a felony conviction, rising from 13% in 1980 to 33% in 2010. During that same time period, the number of Black men remanded to prison more than doubled. Additionally, more than 6.1 million Americans are barred from voting in elections due to felony conviction laws, with African-Americans comprising 38% of this group of legally disenfranchised citizens. Even more alarming, each year, nearly 1,000 people die as a result of police involved shootings—many of whom are Black and Brown victims. In 98.5% of all cases, local prosecutors decline to bring charges against officers, even in the most egregious circumstances. As the people's representative, I will:

- **Support the requirement that all law enforcement officials wear body cameras that are turned on at all relevant times.**
- **Support the elimination of cash bail, at the local level, for non-violent offenses.**
- **Advocate for the basic recognition that mass incarceration and police militarization are not the answers to all law enforcement matters.**
- **Support the complete banning of the use of chokeholds by law enforcement officers.**
- **Lobby local leaders and work with law enforcement agencies to reallocate funding earmarked for law enforcement to those who are more equipped to better deal with mental health issues.**

In light of the aforementioned positions, I believe that a similarly progressive approach should be employed when rooting out and elimination antisemitism when it rears its ugly head not just in this country, but around the world. Since 2018, the rates of reported acts of antisemitism and Anti-Zionism have more than doubled in the United States alone, to 2,024 despicable acts against Jewish Americans. What's more, in the two years since the Pittsburgh synagogue attack, more than a third of American Jews (37%) have taken steps to conceal their Jewishness in public. And nearly 1 in 4 (24%)

say they have avoided wearing, carrying, or displaying items that would enable others to identify them as

Jewish. These acts of discrimination, and the fear that results, is nothing new to the Jewish people, but more must be done NOW to stop these vile attacks.

As a member of Congress, I will support the following measures to combat and eliminate antisemitism in the United States, including:

- **Co-sponsoring legislation that dramatically increases the funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, a fund that provides security enhancements for house of worship and is administered by the Department of Homeland Security.**
- **Supporting legislation that earmarks federal dollars specifically to support the deployment of police protection to houses of worship.**
- **Co-sponsoring legislation for the creation of a Domestic Terrorism Statute so that the Federal Bureau of Investigation can open investigations and prosecute the perpetrators of antisemitic crimes.**

Finally, please note that I understand and fully appreciate the fact that the late Congressman Alcee Hastings was a champion of the Jewish people and the most stalwart advocate for the Jewish community and Israel within the Congressional Black Caucus. As a former staffer and trusted aide to the Congressman, I learned watching him partner with his colleagues of the Jewish faith, in introducing legislation that benefited Israel in real, meaningful and significant ways. U.S. Representative Hastings understood the shared experiences of the Jewish community and African-American community and was a leader in tying the two communities together. If given the opportunity to serve in Congress, I will seek to build on his legacy of advocacy for the Jewish people and Israel and will regularly seek advice and counsel from trusted Jewish voices on the issues that matter most.

Optional: Describe any efforts you've made to combat antisemitism within your own party, and how you've held your political allies accountable for any instances of antisemitism.

4) Do you believe that Israel's role and location in the Middle East is a strategic asset to the United States? Why or why not.

I believe that Israel's location in the Middle East is a strategic asset to the United States, as it is our most trusted friend in the region. Furthermore, with the continued saber-rattling by nation-states like Iran, their intelligence and military assets in the region provide an added layer of protection for the American people as well. As such, I fully support all budgeted expenditures that the United States makes to Israel annually and will always support such efforts if I am elected.

5) On September 23, 2021, the United States [House of Representatives](#) voted 420-9, with two members voting present, to provide \$1 billion to Israel to replenish the Iron Dome missile defense system. If you were in Congress, how would you have voted and why?

If I were in congress when the vote to replenish the Iron Dome missile defense system were taken , I would have voted YES on the legislative appropriation. I believe that Israel has a right to defend itself against all enemies (foreign and domestic) and that the United States has a moral obligation to assist our friend and partner in protecting itself against aggression from terrorist groups and hostile nations.

6) Should the U.S. increase, maintain or decrease the amount of foreign aid to Israel and other countries in the Middle East? Should the U.S. condition its foreign aid based on specific results?

Currently the United States gives \$3.8B per year to Israel, an increase of 27% over past years. I believe that this amount should be maintained, however, if the security situation changes due to unforeseen aggression and Israel is in need of additional assistance, the United States should do what it can to help fund those efforts over and above what it already allocates. Additionally, I do not believe that the nation's foreign aid to Israel should have any more conditions placed upon it than is already agreed to in the Memorandum of Understanding signed between our two nations in September 2016.

7) What is your view of the Abraham Accords, which has brought Arab countries including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan into a warm peace with Israel? Do you believe there will be more peace in the Middle East? If so, what will it take?

I am fully supportive of the Abraham Accords and the efforts to bring about peace and stability between nations in the Middle East. As the region continues to change, I believe that an effective way to bring about peace in the region is by allowing the

Israeli government and those of neighboring Arab states to engage in a concerted effort to resolve their lingering disputes with both the Palestinians and others, while the U.S. plays a pivotal role in supporting regional security efforts to retrain Iran from achieving nuclear ambitions.

8) Do you support or oppose a return to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran? In your view, what is the role of 'leverage' in these negotiations and is the U.S. using its leverage effectively?

I am NOT in support of the 2015 U.S. – Iran Nuclear deal because I believe that it is dangerous to both the long term security of Israel and the region. Moreover, I believe that lifting sanctions against Iran in exchange for their willingness to abandon their nuclear ambitions is a strategic blunder that strengthens Iran while providing few assurances that they will abide by the spirit of the agreement. To that end, I would urge the United States to work more closely with Israel in crafting a solution that achieves our shared objective of neutralizing Iran, without endangering the entire region by placing additional trust and resources in the hands of a nation that has espoused Anti-Zionist rhetoric that is a harbinger of what could come of Iran is left to its own devices.

Circle the one answer you agree with most

9) Government entities should not have to do business with entities that engage in immoral practices or espouse values that are inconsistent with society's

Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Other

10) I support public efforts to divest from companies that engage in BDS

Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Other

11) Anti-Zionism is a form of antisemitism

Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Other

12) The United States should use all means available to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon

Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Other