

It is just common sense to do everything we can to embrace an all-of-the-above approach that is environmentally friendly as well as affordable for the American people.

The American Energy Act is good for the country. We can drill safely off our shores for oil and natural gas. That will create American jobs and make us less dependent on foreigners.

We need to use more nuclear and hydroenergy, and eventually we will, as an American Nation, develop alternative energy. Meanwhile, we don't need the bureaucrats forcing Americans into a none-of-the-above energy plan, raising taxes and forcing us to drive unsafe cars.

And that's just the way it is.

THE UNSHAKABLE BOND BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about the unshakable bond between the United States and Israel. I believe that support for Israel in this Congress is very strong and it is very bipartisan.

I want to commend President Obama for making that speech in Cairo, where he spoke before an Arab audience in what is the most important Arab capital and said that the bond between the United States and Israel is unbreakable. I think those are very, very important words and courageous words coming from the President of the United States in an arena where nothing has ever been said like that before from the President of the United States in such an arena.

But I want to also focus on some of the other things that have happened, namely the push in some quarters to force Israel to make unilateral concessions, mostly about settlements, but unilateral concessions, in return for nothing.

I believe that the Palestinian-Israeli problem must be settled by negotiations and a two-state solution. But I believe that forcing Israel to make unilateral concessions up front is wrong policy.

The agreement will be made ultimately by Israelis and Palestinians, not by Americans, and if Israel is going to negotiate settlements and other things, as Israel will, then simultaneously the Arab States, the Palestinians, I should say, should also be negotiating and giving up things simultaneously.

People say, well, the roadmap which Israel and the Palestinians signed says as a first step Israel must cease settlement activity. That is true. But it also said simultaneously that the Arabs must stop incitement and have a cessation of violence.

So if those two things are done simultaneously and talked about, that is fine. But this public confrontation

against Israel, public demands put upon Israel to halt settlements while the Arabs or the Palestinians have to give nothing in return, is absolutely wrong.

Palestinian President Abbas said the other day, well, he is going to just sit back and let the Israelis make all the concessions. He doesn't have to do anything. Well, that is wrong, and if we pressure the Israelis to make unilateral concessions, we are never going to have peace. Concessions have to be made simultaneously.

I know my good colleague the gentleman from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY) feels as I do, and I would like to yield to her for some of her comments on this matter.

Ms. BERKLEY. Well, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be able to share this time with my very dear friend and colleague, ELIOT ENGEL from New York. I think he made very clear how anxious we are to see peace come to the Middle East and how we support a two-state solution that has been America's policy in the Middle East for many years.

But there is another component to that, and that component is that the Palestinians have to show good faith too—and by showing good faith, that means recognizing Israel's right to exist, adhering to prior agreements and doing other things that would demonstrate, including ending the terror and the violence against Israel—that they are serious partners for peace.

ELIOT, when they talk about sitting down at the peace table, you need to have a partner at the peace table, particularly one that recognizes your right to exist. If your peace partner, so-called, doesn't recognize your right to exist, what are you negotiating, for your right to exist for 10 years, 20 years, 30 years?

When the Palestinians show good faith by truly ending the terrorism, recognizing Israel's right to exist, adhering to prior agreements calling for peace and other measures, then the Israelis can have the security they need to sit down and negotiate a two-state solution.

They have made unilateral withdrawals of land over multiple decades, and, as my dear colleague knows, these have been very, very tough choices for Israel. They have made them with very little in return.

Mr. ENGEL. I thank the gentleman. Let me say this: It is time for the Arabs to step up and normalize relations now with Israel.

I will have more to say in a little while.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE SERVICE MEMBERS FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYER RELIEF ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, earlier this year Congress passed H.R. 1, better known as the economic stimulus package. Included in this package was a provision which modified the first-time homebuyers tax credit language that Congress passed last year. Under the new provision, a first-time homebuyer who purchased a home before December 1, 2009, would get a tax credit of \$8,000, which can be fully retained by the homebuyer so long as the homebuyer does not sell the home for 36 months after purchase. If the home is sold prior to 36 months, the credit will have to be repaid.

Mr. Speaker, under this law, it is unlikely that U.S. servicemen and women who buy their first homes will be able to use the first-time homebuyer tax credit like other American taxpayers. Because many of our military personnel serve at a duty station for only a few years at a time, those who buy a first home are often transferred and have to sell their first residence before the 36-month holding requirement is met.

I recently introduced legislation that would fix this problem by allowing our military men and women the flexibility they need to benefit from this tax credit. H.R. 2398, the Service Members First-Time Homebuyer Relief Act, would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a member of the United States Armed Forces to retain the first-time homebuyer tax credit if they must sell their home within 36 months of purchase because the servicemember is, one, transferred to a new duty station; two, deployed overseas; or, three, required to reside in government quarters during that period.

□ 1915

I am very pleased that this legislation has received the support of the National Military Families Association. Their letter of support for this bill states, and I quote: "Thank you for recognizing the mobile lifestyle of servicemembers and their families. H.R. 2398 waives the recapture of the first-time homebuyer's tax credit for servicemembers who are transferred to a different duty station or deployed overseas. Moves and deployments can be stressful for military families and H.R. 2398 helps alleviate a financial concern of military families."

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I will submit the text of this letter for the RECORD.

NATIONAL MILITARY
FAMILY ASSOCIATION,
May 28, 2009.

Hon. WALTER B. JONES, Jr.,
House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE JONES: The National Military Family Association has long been an advocate for improving the quality of life of our military family members, who

have sacrificed greatly in support of our Nation. We appreciate your sponsorship of the "Service Members First-Time Homebuyer Relief Act of 2009."

Thank you for recognizing the mobile lifestyle of service members and their families. H.R. 2398 waives the recapture of the first time homebuyer's tax credit for service members who are transferred to a different duty station or deployed overseas. Moves and deployments can be stressful for military families and H.R. 2398 helps alleviate a financial concern of military families.

We appreciate your on-going support of service members and their family members. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Katie Savant in our Government Relations Department at (703) 931-6632 or KSavant@MilitaryFamily.org.

The National Military Family Association is the only national organization whose sole focus is the military family and whose goal is to influence the development and implementation of policies that will improve the lives of the families of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and the Commissioned Corps of the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. For 40 years, its staff and volunteers, comprised mostly of military family members, have built a reputation for being the leading experts on military family issues.

Sincerely,

MARY T. SCOTT,

Chairman, Board of Governors.

I hope my colleagues will become co-sponsors of H.R. 2398 and join in helping our servicemembers gain the flexibility they need to benefit from the first-time homebuyer's tax credit.

I have also handed a letter explaining this issue to both Chairman CHARLIE RANGEL and Ranking Member DAVID CAMP, and I hope they will join me in supporting our military families.

With that, Mr. Speaker, before I close, as I always do on the floor of the House, because we have young men and women in Afghanistan and Iraq, we have young men and women who are dying for this country, and young men and women who are losing limbs in those fights in Afghanistan and Iraq, so I ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform. I ask God to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform. And I ask God in his loving arms to hold the families who've given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And three times, Mr. Speaker, I ask God to please bless America. I ask God to please bless America, and again, I ask God to please bless this great Nation known as America.

DEMOCRACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ADLER of New Jersey). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, before I yield to my colleague, Mr. ENGEL, to continue our discussion, I want to mention a few things that are very much on my mind.

We can talk for hours about the existential threat of a nuclear Iran to

Israel. But what I'd like to do in the minute or two that I have before I yield to Congressman ENGEL is, I want to mention the sacrifices that Israel has made in the name of peace.

When there was an opportunity to make peace with Egypt, something that had never been done before, the Israelis gave back the Sinai to the Egyptians, and there's been a peace, a cold peace, but a peace, for all of these years.

When there was extraordinary pressure to leave Lebanon, the Israelis withdrew from Lebanon.

And what was their reward?

They ended up with Hezbollah on their northern border and a war.

When Prime Minister Sharon decided that he would unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza, one would have thought that the Palestinians would have used this opportunity to demonstrate to the world that they were capable of self-governance. Instead of that, they have rained 8,000 rockets on Israel proper over the last 3 years.

I believe that Israel exercised extraordinary restraint before they finally went into the Gaza to end this bloodshed and carnage against their own people.

I understand how the Israelis feel, how tentative they are right now about sitting down and moving towards a two-state solution without any assurances. What is the guarantee, after they left Lebanon and got Hezbollah, after they left the Gaza and got Hamas, that if they leave the West Bank, what is going to happen then?

Do you want a terrorist state living side by side with the democratic State of Israel?

I don't think anybody wants another failed terrorist state. We have to make sure that doesn't happen.

Mr. Speaker, I join my friend and colleague ELIOT ENGEL here tonight to talk about one of our strongest allies, and the only longest-standing democracy (Lebanon held free and fair elections on Sunday, June 7, 2009) in the Middle East: Israel. Under attack for its entire existence, Israel has stood up to threats, enemy armies and countless terrorist attacks, and yet has demonstrated throughout that it is committed to peace and stability for all people within its borders.

President Obama and Secretary Clinton have recently renewed America's efforts to make peace between Israel and the Palestinians. We applaud those efforts. We all want peace in the Middle East.

In the 1970s, after three straight decades of conflict with Egypt, Israel reached a peace agreement with the Egyptians. The courageous Egyptian president Anwar Sadat traveled to Jerusalem and addressed Israel's Parliament, and Israel returned to Egypt the Sinai desert, which had been captured in Israel's self-defensive war in 1967.

In the 1990s, after a long and bloody intifada, after Saddam Hussein rained SCUD missiles on Israel for weeks on end, Israel once again extended her hand in peace when President Clinton brought together Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and former PLO leader Yasser Arafat on the White House lawn.

And in this decade, Israel once again showed her commitment to peace, against all odds. Despite the threat from Hezbollah in the north, Israel pulled back from Lebanon. And despite getting nothing in return, Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip, in order to give the Palestinians there an opportunity to create a forward-looking and flourishing economy there.

Time and time again, Israel has taken the necessary steps to make peace with their neighbors, and shown their eagerness to make peace. That is why we embrace President Obama and Secretary Clinton's efforts to climb this mountain once again.

Unfortunately, though, we have too often seen Israel's gestures toward peace met with violence. In Lebanon, we saw Israel's withdrawal followed by attacks from Hezbollah. In 2006, those became so severe that Israel was forced to retaliate to protect her own citizens. Even today, Hezbollah continues to re-arm, in contravention of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which demands their disarmament so that the people of Lebanon can live without this terrorist scourge in their midst.

And just this past winter, Hamas showed they are not interested in building a successful society in Gaza, in building jobs, businesses, schools, infrastructure, or hospitals. Instead, they shelled Israeli towns constantly, without any provocation. Dozens of rockets fell on Israelis each day, targeting citizens who were not "settlers" in "occupied territory" but were residents of areas that have never been disputed Israeli territory.

When Israel finally did retaliate against these attacks, critics accused them of using "disproportionate force." I'd like to ask those critics: would they have preferred more Israelis died in the Hamas rocket attacks? Would that have been proportionate?

And, all the while, Israel faces a growing threat from Iran, which relentlessly pursues nuclear weapons, in contravention of their own treaties, of international law and of Security Council resolutions. President Ahmadinejad continues to deny the Holocaust and threatens Israel with annihilation should Iran ever succeed in producing a nuclear weapon.

How can one nation withstand so many threats to their very existence? How can any nation hope for peace under such pressure?

And yet, despite it all, Israel has remained incredibly strong and amazingly hopeful at the same time. They have built up their defenses and protected their citizens while—at the very same time—extending olive branches, negotiating and sitting down with their adversaries.

So, we stand here together, ready to embrace peace and ready to make peace so that Israelis, Palestinians and all people of the Middle East might finally live in security. But we are also here to say that Israel has not been the problem. They have been ready to make peace at any time and are ready today. But the question is: do they have a partner for peace?

Are the Palestinians ready for peace? Do they have a government that can stop terror? Will they recognize Israel's right to exist? Will they abide by past agreements they signed? Will they turn over Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit? The Palestinians must answer those questions before I, for one, will believe that Israel's overtures will be met with peace, rather than more violence.

Mr. Speaker, Israel stands ready for peace, American stands ready for peace, and we welcome President Obama's efforts to broker an