

As the daughter of a Holocaust survivor, I understand personally how important Israel is for all Jews everywhere. On May 14, 1948, Israel declared independence, providing a new safe haven for Holocaust survivors and for Diaspora Jews before and since the Holocaust, who experienced a millennium of anti-Semitism.

In honor of Israeli Independence Day and in recognition of the close relationship between Israel and the United States, we will continue to work with our trusted ally to pursue a secure and peaceful Middle East, assuring liberty, economic prosperity, and security for Israel and its neighbors. While Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran threaten this security with words and missiles, the U.S. Congress stands committed to work towards a secure Israel where all of its citizens can live, prosper, and dream in security.

In its 62 years of nationhood, Israel exemplifies freedom, opportunity, and democratic values. Its unfettered elections, transparent press, and vital economy distinguish it as a leader in the Middle East. It is our closest ally in the region. As such, I welcome the opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate its independence and our shared efforts to ensure its safe and secure future.

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

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

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

HONORING ISRAELI INDEPENDENCE DAY

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

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support House Concurrent Resolution 260 and acknowledge both the sacrifices and the celebrations of the Israeli people on their Independence Day, Yom Ha'atzmaut.

Sixty-two years ago, the founders of the Jewish state gathered together in Tel Aviv to declare: "Exiled from the land of Israel, the Jewish people remain faithful to it in all the countries of their dispersion, never ceasing to pray and hope for their return and the restoration of their national freedom."

In every turn of Jewish history, expulsion after expulsion, pogrom after pogrom, the vision and the dream of the return to Israel would keep the Jewish people going. It was this hope that fueled the establishment of the state of Israel, and through every battle and every war, the words of the Israeli Proclamation of Independence

continued to hold true. The people of Israel's connection to the land keeps them faithful to the ideals of the state that was established 62 years ago.

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I feel this commitment every time I visit Israel and see the unshakeable dedication to improving the Jewish homeland. Since its founding 62 years ago, Israel has become a modern state, a beacon of democracy, and a hub of technological advancement. And the world has benefited from Israel's contributions.

Israel is the world's largest per capita user of solar water heaters in their homes. Israel will be launching the world's first electric car network throughout the country, reducing their dependence on foreign oil, and serving as a model to the rest of the world. Israel's experience on the front lines of terrorism have allowed them to use their first responder skills when humanitarian crises occur around the world, not just in Israel. Just a few months ago, Israel dispatched a team to Haiti, setting up a field hospital, delivering medical care, and saving lives. They were the first ones on the ground.

Finally, Israel has taken painful steps toward peace, making sacrifices, sometimes unilaterally, toward the goal of reaching an agreement with its Arab neighbors. Israelis live under constant threat from Hamas's barrage of rocket attacks from Gaza, from the dangerous and genocidal words of a dictator in Iran, from a buildup of weapons on its northern border, from a despicable campaign to delegitimize Israel on the international stage.

While the threats against the United States and Israel grow and strengthen, so too must our joint resolve to confront them. I am proud to be a supporter of a strong U.S.-Israel relationship. We are stronger together through our friendship. We are safer together through our cooperation. And in this uncertain world, the United States and Israel need each other.

On this Israeli Independence Day, I acknowledge the brave men and women and their families who have sacrificed so much for the Jewish homeland, and I look forward to the day when Israel can celebrate independence in peace and security.

HONORING FIRST LIEUTENANT ROBERT COLLINS

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

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart and a humble spirit that I come today to this People's House, to this floor of the People's House to honor an American hero.

Mr. Speaker, First Lieutenant Robert Collins answered his Nation's call to duty after graduating from West Point Military Academy in 2008. And earlier this month he made the ulti-

mate sacrifice on behalf of his fellow countrymen. Lieutenant Collins was deployed to Iraq only last fall, and was based with his unit in the northern part of the country.

Lieutenant Collins recently wrote that he was working to improve security conditions and the quality of life for the Iraqi people. In this year's national elections in Iraq, his platoon helped provide security for a free and fair election process, and I know that he took great pride in that.

He was a man willing and ready to serve his country. As a dedicated soldier, he wanted to help spread far and wide the same freedom we love and cherish here in the United States. Lieutenant Collins' willingness to help others came as no surprise to anyone who knew him. A native of Tyrone, Georgia, and a graduate of Sandy Creek High School, he was well respected among his peers. In fact, one former classmate wrote that Collins "was compassionate and at the same time had a great sense of humor that could not be matched. Robert would always be there for people when they needed help."

His parents, Deacon and Sharon, are both retired lieutenant colonels. They proudly served our Nation, and they proudly supported their son's decision to serve our country. While we honor Lieutenant Collins, we should also think of Deacon and Sharon. Lieutenant Collins was also blessed to have Nicole, his fiancée, and childhood sweetheart.

Last week Lieutenant Collins came home to Georgia for the last time, and his community came out to honor him. From local veterans to ordinary citizens, the procession route was lined with people waving American flags and paying their great respect to this hero. One gentleman summed it up best when he said, "I am a patriot. Anyone who gives up their life for my freedom, well, this is the least I can do."

Today I stand here to honor First Lieutenant Robert Collins because it was the least I could do. He stood for me and all Americans by serving and sacrificing to our Nation, and he is an American hero. I want to thank him from me and my family and the generations to come. And I also want to thank his loving parents for the sacrifice that they have given to this great Nation.

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 addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ISRAEL'S 62ND INDEPENDENCE DAY

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

Ms. CHU. Sixty-two years ago on Monday, the State of Israel was born, and on that day many did not believe Israel could withstand the impending struggle and remain a beacon of hope and democracy for the world. Despite decades of terror and threats to its existence, the nation still stands today, proud and defiant to those who would wish her harm.

Sixty-two years ago, just minutes after David Ben-Gurion announced the establishment of a home for the Jewish people, the United States was the first Nation to recognize its independence. Our unwavering support for the security and prosperity of Israel continues to this day because of the core ideals our two countries share, ideals of perseverance, democracy, and innovation. I am proud to stand here today to congratulate the State and people of Israel on the anniversary of their independence, and to pledge that we will continue to work together to achieve global security, peace, and prosperity.

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

(Mr. ISRAEL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING THE 62ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Yom HaAtzmaut, the 62nd anniversary of the independence of the State of Israel, and to reaffirm the unbreakable bond between our two democratic nations.

Sixty-two years ago, on May 14, 1948, the State of Israel declared sovereignty and independence as a homeland for the Jewish people. With little resources and seemingly insurmountable obstacles, Israel has become a thriving and prosperous democracy, and has made worldwide contributions in technology, medicine, agriculture, and environmental innovation. Despite this progress, Israel continues to face threats from hostile actors such as Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah.

This was strikingly clear when I led a congressional delegation to Israel this past January. Meeting after meeting we heard from strong and resilient Israelis who have lived their lives under the constant showering of rockets and continued suicide bombing attacks. Put simply, we would not allow our government to stand idly by as hundreds of rockets and mortars came crashing down on the heads of our citizens, and we cannot expect Israel to sit idly by either. I believe the Government of Israel has not only a right, but also an obligation to protect its citizens. And I firmly stand by this right and obligation.

Israel's commitment to democracy, freedom of religion, and human rights is a testament to the world view it shares with the United States. We face the same threats in an unstable region. But above all, we share a deep commitment to stand by each other and face the challenges ahead.

One of those challenges that we faced together was the devastating earthquake in Haiti. I commend the efforts and generosity of the Israeli people who worked on the ground in Haiti, the State of Israel, the Israel Defense Forces, and the Israeli people for their outstanding contributions to earthquake relief in Haiti.

In a world of great uncertainty, Israel has been a key partner, ally, and friend of the United States, and I look forward to our continued work together based on these shared values.

Before I close, I would like to take a moment to recognize the Jewish community of South Florida, where I call my home. These inspiring men and women continue to work tirelessly with me so that we can be sure the Jewish State of Israel is secure and prosperous. And it is with them in mind that I say these next three words with gratitude, passion, and resolve: Am Yisrael Chai! The Nation of Israel lives!

HONORING THE 62ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

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

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the 62nd anniversary of the founding of the Jewish State of Israel. Israel has weathered decades of war and terrorism, but it remains a thriving democracy and America's closest friend and ally in the Middle East.

As a very young child, I remember the immense pride and joy my family felt when the Jewish state became a reality. I had the privilege of traveling once again to Israel earlier this month. And again I was struck by the resilience, the courage, and innovation of the Israeli people, as well as their pride in the beautifully lush country they had built in the desert.

I thought about my childhood again and the number of times that I had saved my nickels and dimes to buy trees and tree certificates that we used for birthdays and anniversaries to plant trees in Israel and to turn that desert and make it bloom.

No longer just a longing of the Jewish people, Israel today is a leader in technology, and energy, and scientific innovation, including medical innovations. It is also the only democratic state in the Middle East, and our steadfast friend and ally and partner. Today we mark the 62nd anniversary of the State of Israel and celebrate the unbreakable bonds between our two countries, the unbreakable bonds between our two countries.

Sixty-two years after the United States became the first country to recognize the new State of Israel, we still share common dreams and continue to strengthen our critical relationship. Just minutes after the declaration of the founding of the State of Israel, President Harry Truman recognized that country, and it began a 62-year long commitment, nonpartisan, bipartisan, universal throughout our country recognizing the importance of our relationship with the State of Israel.

I believe that this Congress of the United States maintains that dedication and will forevermore.

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

(Mr. ROTHMAN of New Jersey addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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

(Mr. WEINER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

62ND ANNIVERSARY OF ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE

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

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 62nd anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel and join with the Israeli people in honoring the country's founders and marking its great achievements and successes.

On May 14, 1948, Israel's founders declared that the country would be not only a Jewish State, but also a democratic one, where all citizens, regardless of religion, ethnicity, race or gender, would live in peace with equal civil rights. Since that day, Americans have stood side by side with Israel to form a strong bond of friendship. Even as we celebrate, we also look forward to the next 62 years and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to again congratulate the Israeli Government, its people, and others on this, their 62nd year of independence.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Israel on her 62nd anniversary of independence.

On May 14, 1948 the day the British Mandate expired, the new Jewish state—the State of Israel—was formally established in parts of what was known as the British Mandate for Palestine. With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Jewish independence, lost two thousand years earlier, was restored. When Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion read the Declaration of Independence, 11 minutes later when those words had traveled halfway around the world, they were endorsed by