

Second, it increases the people at the Department of Commerce who are responsible for identifying new export opportunities abroad and matching these markets with American companies. For the past 2 years, the program that specializes in matching small business with potential export markets has not replaced retiring officials, losing roughly 200 people since 2004 even as demand for their assistance continues to increase. This bill would restore staffing levels in this program to their 2004 levels. I talked to Secretary Locke this morning. I know he is focused on this. He is doing reshuffling of people in his own department. That is the key to this.

Finally, the legislation will expand the Commerce Department's Rural Export Initiative to ensure that small and medium-sized businesses located in rural areas know about all of the available export opportunities for them. Why is this cost-worthy? Well, look at this: a return of approximately \$213 on each dollar—\$213 on each dollar. That is what we are talking about here.

What we are trying to do here, Senator LEMIEUX and I, with this bill and also with our bill regarding Cuba is to open these markets and say: You know what, if we can give our small and medium-sized businesses and our farmers a little help, either getting in the door, knowing whether a customer is real, letting them know where their product is hot, what countries are interested, they are going to do the work. These are private sector jobs. Our idea here is not to create the jobs ourselves but to help them to get into these markets, to make them on an even playing field with the big businesses that already have the resources to do it.

The ability to envision creative new products and then develop them, commercialize them, and sell them has been part of the American dream as long as there has been an American dream. That spirit of innovation has gotten us everything in my State from the Post-it note to the pacemaker. Those companies—Medtronic started in a garage, and 3M started up in Two Harbors, MN, a tiny little town. Target started as a dry goods storefront on Nicollet Mall in Minneapolis, and they grew to what they were. But they can only do this now if they get that kind of help. It is no longer only America that is their market; it is India, it is Kazakhstan, it is Turkey, it is China.

So it is not as easy now to build to the point that they need to build to. That is why Senator LEMIEUX and I are introducing this bill, to assist the Commerce Department to assist these small and medium-size businesses. As we continue to fight through this economic crisis, it is important to keep the end game in mind, an end game where the United States is again the world leader in job creation by virtue of developing and selling the world's most innovative products. This bill will help us get there.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to engage in a colloquy with the Senator from Connecticut.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

U.S.-ISRAELI RELATIONS

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I say to my friend, I know he has been observing in the last few days the events that have transpired in regard to the situation in Israel and the reaction of the United States to the announcement that there would be additional housing construction in areas the Israelis believe are within the boundaries that will exist once peace is settled, and that the Palestinians are of the view that it is their area—as there are many territorial disputes between the Palestinians and the Israelis, which is one of the reasons there is a compelling argument for a peace process.

I know my friend from Connecticut is disturbed, as I am, about the level of tension in the public discourse that has been going on, which cannot only not be helpful to Israeli-U.S. relations but also to the ability of Israel to deal with other tensions in the region and the existential threats they face from their neighbors who have threatened their extinction.

So I have had the great pleasure and honor of travelling to Israel on numerous occasions with my friend from Connecticut. I would state for the record that no one has a closer relationship and a better understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian situation and the urgency of the peace process.

I would just ask my friend, doesn't he think if we want the Israeli Government to act in a way that would be more in keeping with our objectives, that it does not help them to have public disparagement by the Secretary of State, by the President's political adviser on the Sunday shows? On the contrary, shouldn't we lower the dialog, talk quietly among friends, and work together toward the mutual goals we share?

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Arizona for the question and for the opportunity to engage in this dialog on the important and troubling course of relations at this moment between the United States and Israel.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that this colloquy be conducted as in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. I thank the Chair.

I say to my friend from Arizona what not only he knows, but what he has helped to bring about throughout his career, are two things: that the American relationship with Israel is one of the strongest, most important, most steadfast bilateral alliances we have in the world because it is not based on temporal matters—that is, matters that come and go and politics or diplomacy—it is based on shared values, shared strategic interests in the world, and, unfortunately, now on the fact that we in the United States and the Israelis are also targets of the Islamist extremists, the terrorists who threaten the security of so much of the world. So we have a strong bilateral relationship.

The second thing to say, in answering my friend's question, is that the Israelis depend, to a very large degree, on America's friendship as they approach the world. The Senator is absolutely right, without a confidence—not that everything Israel does America will support, but that underlying we are heading in the same direction, we are allies, we are friends, it is as if we are part of the same family. Without that confidence in the U.S.-Israel relationship, the Israelis will not have the confidence to take the risks necessary for peace. So the uproar over the last several days is very troubling in that regard.

Vice President BIDEN, as my friend knows, went to Israel to reset the relationship. Unfortunately, at that time, from all the Israeli Government says—I have no reason to doubt them—a bureaucratic decision was made within one department of the government, the Ministry of the Interior, to issue a permit—I gather one of seven permits necessary within the next few years for this building project to take place. It has become not just a bureaucratic mistake but a major, for the moment, source of division between our ally, Israel, and ourselves, and it does not help anyone to continue this.

I just want to say briefly to my friend because he said something most people do not know—and this is my understanding of the situation—the permits for this housing are in an area of Jerusalem that is today mostly Jewish. The Israeli Government has taken the position, however, since 1967 that anybody ought to be able to buy property and build and live in any section of Jerusalem they choose to regardless of their religion or nationality or anything else. That is a very American concept.

Secondly, this particular part of Jerusalem is, in most anybody's vision of a possible peace settlement, going to be part of Israel. A lot of Israelis believe all of Jerusalem should remain the eternal unified capital of Israel. But going to the negotiations that occurred between President Clinton, Prime Minister Barak, Chairman Arafat in 2000, which were about as detailed as any recent negotiations, this

particular neighborhood of Jerusalem, in the document that was almost accepted by Arafat, was part of Israel.

So it is not a violation of that. It is not a violation of the moratorium on new settlements that Prime Minister Netanyahu adopted, and it ought not to be—I tell you, that first wave of reaction, when Vice President BIDEN was there, I understood. He was upset. It was embarrassing. Maybe some of the words—“condemn” was a little strong for a bureaucratic mistake. But why this continues now, including on the Sunday talk shows, with Mr. Axelrod saying it was an affront and an insult by Israel to the United States, serves nobody’s good. It does not serve our interests; it does not serve Israel’s interests. It helps those like the people in Tehran who want to cause difficulty throughout the region.

Mr. MCCAIN. Could I ask my colleague, shouldn’t we be emphasizing what I very much appreciated? Vice President BIDEN—and I quote him—said:

In my experience one necessary precondition for progress [toward peace in the Middle East] is that every time progress is made, it’s made when the rest of the world knows there is absolutely no space between the United States and Israel when it comes to security, none.

I thought the Vice President had it exactly right, and as the Senator says: Look, mistakes are made. It is a government in Israel which is sometimes interesting to watch, particularly when you watch the proceedings in the Knesset, the parliamentary proceedings.

But somehow it seems that the rhetoric has escalated and maybe given the impression to the wrong people—the neighbors of Israel who have stated time after time they are bent on Israel’s extinction; the statements by Ahmadinejad that he wants to “wipe Israel off the map”—and that perhaps there may be sufficient space, as the Vice President pointed out, that they could exploit that in a way that would be harmful to the State of Israel. I know that was not the intention of the President’s political adviser on Sunday, and it is not the intention of the Secretary of State. But the Secretary of State knows the Israelis very well. She has had dealings with all of the countries in the region. She is very knowledgeable and experienced.

I hope all of us would realize, let’s lower the rhetoric. Let’s try and fix the problems that exist amongst the close friends we are rather than escalate the tensions that exist in a very dangerous time.

The Senator from Connecticut and I were recently briefed about perhaps increased tensions in southern Lebanon, the possibility of attacks from southern Lebanon into Israel, the continued nuclear buildup on the part of the Iranians, the continued statements of assertiveness by the President of Syria, al-Assad.

There are increased tensions in the region, and this is not the time—cer-

tainly, most importantly, not the time—that we give the impression that there is such differences between ourselves and Israel that it could be exploited by Israel’s enemies.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Arizona. I agree totally with what he said. I think it is very important the Senator from Arizona has gone to the speech that Vice President BIDEN made. I believe it was on Wednesday of last week in Tel Aviv at Tel Aviv University.

What is interesting is, that speech came after the first date he was there. When this bureaucratic announcement of housing permits being issued in Jerusalem was made, Vice President BIDEN put out a statement condemning that action. I understand why he was upset by it, that it had been happening when he came. Prime Minister Netanyahu outright apologized in public for it. He said he is appointing a review committee to look at how it happened so they could set up a mechanism within the Israeli Government so a decision such as that would not be made, if I understood what their intention is, without the Prime Minister’s office being notified. Then Vice President BIDEN made quite an important speech at Tel Aviv University.

The Senator from Arizona is absolutely right. The Vice President said the relationship between the United States and Israel is unbreakable, and there is no space between us. When there is space between us, it only helps our shared enemies, not the two of us, the two great democracies.

Vice President BIDEN also made clear that while we are committed to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, it is very important for both—and Prime Minister Netanyahu has too. He has taken his Likud Party to a place it has never been before. In a speech he gave at Bar-Ilan University, he said for the first time, very clearly, as the Likud Prime Minister, that he supports the two-state solution: two countries, two peoples side by side. Then he issued that moratorium on settlement expansion in a whole series of areas which Secretary Clinton, in an earlier visit, described as unprecedented.

Then we go to the Vice President’s speech. There, he focuses on Iran and the threat of a nuclear Iran, the threat of an Iran that suppresses the rights of its people, and he says not only is Iran explicitly a threat to Israel—as Ahmadinejad has said, threatening Israel’s existence—Vice President BIDEN made very clear our concern about an Iranian nuclear weapon is not because of what Ahmadinejad said about Israel, although, obviously, that concerns us; it is because a nuclear, autocratic, tyrannical, totalitarian Iran threatens the short-, medium-, and long-term security of the United States of America.

After that speech, I thought this whole business about the permits for housing was over. Yet then the State Department spokesman comes out on

Friday with very strong language about the phone conversation with the Secretary of State whom, of course, the Senator from Arizona and I not only respect but like very much. She is our friend, our colleague. She has a long record of support for the United States-Israel relationship. But Friday afternoon’s press statement seemed to be dredging up again something that seemed to have been calmed and ought to be calmed.

The Senator from Arizona is absolutely right. I take it that is the point the Senator is making: There is too much that ties us together with Israel, too much on the line for both countries, to continue to make a mistake, for which the Prime Minister of Israel has apologized, into a division between two great allies.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, wouldn’t my colleague agree that the original purpose of the Vice President’s trip, as I understand it, was a precursor or even an announcement of indirect talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis, using the good auspices of Senator George Mitchell? So the trip was a signal to the world that the process of peace between Israelis and the Palestinians was on track, and a beginning, albeit a modest one, was taking place.

So it might be good if our friends in the administration—and other places in the United States—could start refocusing our efforts on the peace process, which came very close to the beginning—again, modest, indirect but still beginning—of peace talks and emphasize the need to commence those, assure our Arab friends in the region of our commitment to the Palestinian-Israeli peace talks, and move forward in that direction. We need to understand that the Prime Minister of Israel has apologized and is trying, as the Senator from Connecticut pointed out, to put a mechanism in place to make sure that an incident of this nature would not arise again.

So we could go back—I will not—and be very critical of the Obama administration’s initial demand of a complete freeze of settlements which was, in my view, an unnecessary precondition and an impediment, but that is done also. So now we have had our spat, we have had our family fight, and it is time for us to now stop. We have to get our eye back on the goal, which is the commencement of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, and move forward with that—and I know the Senator from Connecticut shares my view—particularly with the leadership we are seeing on the Palestinian side. The chances for fruitful negotiations are better than they have been since the time the Senator from Connecticut cited back when President Clinton had Arafat and Ehud Barak to Camp David.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I agree totally with my friend. Let’s cut the family fighting, the family feud. It is unnecessary, and it is destructive of our shared national interests, the

United States and Israel, and it takes our eye off the two balls we have to focus on. One is the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the other is the threat of a nuclear Iran, which is not only a threat to us and Israel, it is a threat to Palestinian leadership because Iran is the No. 1 supporter of Hamas, which is the foremost antagonist to the leadership of the Palestinian Authority.

The Senator from Arizona is absolutely right. Peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians requires very difficult, delicate negotiations. But we are at a moment—and my friend and I were together in Israel and the Palestinian areas in January of this year and we met with the leadership. It is an interesting moment, because in both countries the economy is doing pretty well. The Palestinians have seen a real surge in economic growth. Security is better on both sides. We have leadership on both sides: Netanyahu in Israel and the President of the Palestinian Authority, Abu Mazen, and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. We have three leaders there committed to the two-state solution, renouncing terrorism, a peaceful process. If, for some reason, people in the American Government continue this dispute, frankly, it makes it hard for not just the Israelis but the Palestinians to get into the peace process because we can't be more demanding than they are, if you will. I think Abu Mazen and Salam Fayyad want to move the peace process forward, I am convinced, as Prime Minister Netanyahu said.

So it is time to lower voices and get over the family feud between the United States and Israel. It doesn't serve anybody's interests but our enemies: George Mitchell—I will say it here—is a saint. Whoever the saint of patience is, George works under that saint's aegis. Through his patience and persistence, the proximity talks between Israel and the Palestinian leadership are about to begin, and they have the prospect of making some real progress.

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Connecticut.

I rise today to address the very concerning, and unfortunately very public, tensions that have broken out recently between the governments of the United States and Israel. I am not here to take sides or to call out one party at the expense of the other. There have been enough accusations, recriminations, and bad blood.

I certainly understand the anger felt by members of the U.S. administration that the announcement of new settlement construction in East Jerusalem by Israel's Interior Ministry simply seemed intended to embarrass Vice President BIDEN in the middle of his visit. I can also understand the anger felt by Israelis that the U.S. reaction to this announcement has been out of step with the announcement itself. At this point, there is little to be gained by either side by focusing on their

anger, however justified they feel it is. It is now time to focus on what matters most: the common interests we share, the urgent need for cooperation between us, and the large capacity within our alliance to move beyond differences and work together.

Vice President Biden spoke to exactly these themes in his excellent speech in Tel Aviv during his recent visit to Israel—a speech, I would add, that was delivered 2 days after the Interior Ministry's announcement. Perhaps the most correct and important thing the Vice President said was this: "In my experience one necessary precondition for progress toward peace in the Middle East is that every time progress is made, it's made when the rest of the world knows there is absolutely no space between the United States and Israel when it comes to security, none." This is absolutely correct, and we all need to remember it right now.

We now have a conservative Israeli leader who is committed to the goal of two States for two peoples, living side by side in peace and security. We have a leadership in the Palestinian Authority that is committed to beginning negotiations while also building the institutions of a democratic Palestinian state, including effective security forces that can enforce the rule of law and fight terrorism. We have a U.S. administration, and U.S. Congress, that is committed to being engaged in and supportive of the pursuit of peace in the Middle East.

So let us focus on the opportunity we have, the United States and Israel together, as historic allies, to achieve goals that serve both our interests. The United States is completely committed to Israel's security, so Israel can feel totally confident in taking on the large and difficult decisions that peace requires. As the Vice President said, there should be no space between these allies—none.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KAUFMAN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

SUPERFUND SITES

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, the House is on my mind right now, since the House seems to have something important going on with regard to something known as health care reform and health insurance reform. We are waiting expectantly to hear information that the House will get the votes together and pass the Senate-passed bill on health reform that we passed on Christmas Eve.

But I came to speak about another subject today, something I voted on

when I was a young Congressman, way back in 1980, and that something was known as the Clean Water and Clean Air Act. One of the parts of that legislation—it has a fancy name, but in essence that is what it was, clean air and clean water—one of the major thrusts of the legislation was that we had these toxic waste dumps all over the country. They were first exposed by a toxic canal, called Love Canal, in the State of New York. The cause for the toxic dump, the company, was long since gone, probably bankrupt, and, therefore, there was no financial means by which we could go about cleaning it up. We couldn't get to the responsible party because they had long since left town or they had long since gone through a series of bankruptcies and there were no funds available to clean it up, and that left it on all the rest of us—the taxpayers.

What we found was there were a lot of these places all over the country. This was particularly true in my State of Florida. All of these sites are now called Superfund sites, named after the trust fund that was being set up, filled with trust fund money that would come from a fee being imposed upon the industries that were doing the polluting. The concept was that the polluter was going to pay instead of the average taxpayer, and they called this trust fund the Superfund. So they called these sites the Superfund sites. In my State, we have 52 of these sites, and we have another 13 identified. But nationwide there are over 1,200 of these sites that have already been named and which need to be cleaned up.

Here is the problem. Why aren't they cleaned up? Well, as I said, when I was a young Congressman and we passed this new law, we were going to have the financial means to clean up these sites by having the industries that were polluting pay a fee that annually would go into this trust fund and, in return, they were getting something. They were getting relieved of any financial liability. That was the deal. This law operated along fine for about 15 years, and it came up for renewal, and lo and behold, those industries activated their lobbyists and they killed the reimposition of that fee in the mid-1990s. So they got off scot free because they don't have any more liability, but they are not paying their fair share.

The industries were the petroleum industry—and it was a minor tax that was imposed on the production of oil and the importation of foreign oil into this country—and the chemical industry, in 42 chemicals that were produced, and there was a small fee that was assessed for that which went in and filled up this fund basically to the tune of about \$1.3 billion a year. But along come the mid-1990s and those industries activate their lobbyists and they kill the fees on a going-forward basis—but they didn't kill their relief from liability.

What we have now is a trust fund that is depleted of money. We have