

# Greater Philadelphia ZOA

## 2020 Congressional Candidates

### Questionnaire Results

Members of the House of Representatives deal with U.S. foreign policy and related matters as part of governing, yet congressional campaigns seldom focus on foreign policy unless there is a hot-button item such as a war or tariffs. If it comes up in a debate or forum, rarely is the subject about the Middle East.

What happens in the Middle East, to American Jewry and to our Christian friends is of great concern and interest to the ZOA community. So to help inform our members, supporters and the pro-Israel community the Greater Philadelphia Chapter of the Zionist Organization devised a brief questionnaire about candidate's views and positions on select issues. We emailed the six-item to candidates in congressional races said to be competitive within our region. They are:

Pennsylvania's First, Fourth, Seventh and Tenth districts as well as New Jersey's Second and Third districts.

The Zionist Organization of America is a 501(c)(3) non-profit entity and as such we cannot endorse candidates. The purpose of publishing their replies to our questions (or to let people know that a candidate did not reply) is informational and nothing more. We know that candidates and campaigns in heated contests concentrate their efforts on organizations that may endorse them. Therefore it has been our experience that the response rate is low. Please see an explanation of our process this year at bottom.

#### **The Questions:**

1. Describe the significance of the U.S.-Israel relationship and should that relationship be strengthened?
2. What is the one issue which, in your view, has impeded peace between Israel and the Palestinian-Arabs?
3. The Palestinian Authority had received hundreds of millions of dollars in aid each year from the United States both directly and indirectly (such as through UNRWA). That aid was halted by President Trump. Knowing that the Palestinian Authority incentivizes its people to murder and maim Jews by paying them a "stipend" that far exceeds the average salary there, do you believe that all aid should be restored, some aid should be restored or no aid should be restored?
4. President Trump withdrew the United States from the "Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action" ("Iran deal") between Iran and the so-called P5+1. Do you believe that the United States should re-enter the Iran deal and if so, why?
5. Attacks against Jews in America are at record numbers in many states and nationally, and open Jew-hatred seems more prevalent than ever in social media,

on campuses and even among members of Congress. As a member of Congress, what would you do to stem this dangerous trend?

6. Christians throughout the broad Middle East and North Africa are being persecuted and massacred, their churches destroyed and there have even been forced conversions. As a member of Congress, what would you do to call attention to this plight, help the victims and punish the governments that encourage and even sanction these acts?

## **The Responses:**

### **Pennsylvania 1<sup>st</sup>**

**Christina Finello (D):** Did not respond.

**(I) Brian Fitzpatrick (R):** Did not respond.

### **Pennsylvania 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Kathy Barnette (R):**

1. “I believe the U.S.-Israel relationship is one that should always be of great importance to all Americans. This is because Israel and the America have shared values. Additionally, our bilateral relationship is increasingly based on tangible and steadily increasing security and economic interests and not just shared values alone.

For example, many constituents in my district are concerned about environmental issues. According to a recent report put out by the Institute for Economics and Peace, after examining the ecological threats faced by 157 countries, they found that 19 countries with the highest number of ecological threats in 2020 were also among the world’s least peaceful nations including many countries that surrounds Israel.

So, if we’re talking about decreasing the effects of climate change, we should include working towards peace in the Middle East. This administration’s efforts to bring Arab and Muslim nations to the table following the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain peace deal is historic and highlights the dynamic relationship we have with Israel. Cooperation between nations in the areas of protecting our planet can be an additional benefit.”

2. “I believe there are those who do not want peace in the Middle East. As such, they have resisted every peace deal on resolving the Palestinian issue. The ingenious of the current administration to go “around” the Palestinian issue and go straight to UAE was simply brilliant resulting in genuine success.”

3. “No aid should be restored until the PA come to the table to negotiate peace, have an open and fair election for its people, and stop trying to get

President Erdogan of Turkey to assist them into getting more unworkable concessions.

The concept of “Pay to Slay” is reprehensible and in no way should be funded with U.S. American taxpayer’s dollars.”

4. “No, the U.S. should NOT reenter the Iran Deal.”

5. “As a member of Congress, I would move immediately to have anti-Semitism added to the Hate Crime bill.

I would also rigorously fight to have other members of Congress who spout anti-Semitic slurs to be censured.”

6. “First and foremost, I would not turn a blind eye to what is happening. I would use my platform to specifically shine a bright light on this modern day slavery.”

(I) **Madeleine Dean** (D): Did not respond.

## **Pennsylvania 7<sup>th</sup>**

**Lisa Scheller** (R):

1. “The relationship between the US and Israel needs to be as strong as possible. The United States and Israel encompasses over 80% of the world’s Jewish population. We are the beacons of light, hope, and freedom to the world. The American Israel relationship is a matter of life and death because there are regimes that want to wipe the Jewish people off the face of the earth. The relationship is much deeper with the economic and scientific cooperation between our countries. We need to continually work on strengthening this relationship.”
2. “There can never be true peace while the Palestinian leadership denies the right of the existence of Israel. Israel cannot negotiate when ultimately the Palestinians believe in “From the river to the sea”. When the Palestinians want peace, there will be peace. Unfortunately, they continue to be funded by and are proxies for the true threat to Israel, which is Iran. I am pleased that the Abraham accords are taking place, normalizing relations with Arab countries. This has the potential to start putting real pressure on the Palestinians.”
3. “Absolutely not! To offer compensation to families of terrorists is to promote terrorism and the murder of innocent Jews. These blood payments should never have been allowed in the first place, let alone restarted. These Arab groups put no value on human life, not even their own people. They use their civilians as human shields, then blame Israel. It is only through persecution of their own people that they keep power.”
4. “Absolutely NOT! The JPCOA was flawed from the beginning with it’s \$150 billion payment with no way to be accountable. JPCOA all but

guarantees that Iran will have a nuclear weapon in the not so distant future. They didn't stop enriching uranium and what they did do is develop missile technology so that once they develop the bomb in the next few years, they will have the means to deliver it to Israel. Iran **MUST NEVER** have nuclear capability and we must do everything we can to prevent it! Extreme sanctions, not JPCOA will be how that happens.”

5. “First and foremost, this trend is originating from progressive left, who are the party of BDS and antisemitism. The Antisemitic words of people like Ilan Omar, Rashida Tliab, and AOC are going unchecked. College campuses are caving in to pressures from social justice organizations banning free speech from conservatives and Pro Israel voices. We all need to stand up for our people now, as Esther did when G-d said “ You have come for such a time as this”. We are in that time now. I will stand up!”
6. “We must speak out against antisemitism and discrimination wherever it occurs. We must certainly call attention to it. While I support the use of sanctions to help bring bad actors into line, in terms of financial and legislative priorities, we must make sure that we take care of our own people. Help for them can not imply less help for Jews and Israel.”

(I) **Susan Wild** (D): Did not respond.

## **Pennsylvania 10<sup>th</sup>**

**Eugene DePasquale** (D): Did not respond.

(I) **Scott Perry** (R):

1. “As the only Democracy in the Middle East and our strongest ally in the region, Israel is vital to US interests in the region and across the globe. The security and economic relationship between the two Nations have never been stronger, as a result of the decisive actions taken by the Trump Administration: moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem; preventing US funding for the Palestinian Authority; defeating ISIS; and facilitating the historic peace deals between Israel and some of her Arab neighbors. The interests of both nations will be served by building on these historic achievements, strengthening the alliance, and continuing to spread peace through strength.”
2. “The biggest issue impeding peace between Israel and the Palestinian-Arabs is the refusal of Palestinian-Arab leaders to acknowledge Israel's right to exist. For decades, Israel has negotiated in good faith as Palestinian-Arab leaders promote violence and terrorism. No nation can make peace with

those who seek to destroy it; Israel is no exception. By parroting the Palestinian-Arab propaganda, the U.N. and much of the international community does a great disservice to the prospect of peace by fomenting violence against Israel. Until this is addressed, there can be no peace.”

3. “For years, I’ve called for the US government to stop funding the Palestinian Authority due to its promotion of violence, refusal to acknowledge Israel’s right to exist, and the subsidies it provides to terrorists. No American tax dollars should be spent on those who promote terrorism and take up arms against our allies – period. Restoring funding to the corrupt, radical leaders of the Palestinian Authority does nothing to promote US interests or peace in the region.”

4. “We shouldn’t ever have been party to the JCPOA and should not re-enter the Agreement. By coddling the Mullahs in Iran – and providing them with massive sums of money – the Obama-Biden Administration made the world more dangerous. Instead, we must continue the maximum pressure campaign until the Iranians end their nuclear program, stop funding terrorism across the globe, and end the oppression of their own people who seek nothing but freedom and peace.”

5. “The rise in violence against Jews is a disturbing trend that must be addressed. Those who seek Israel’s destruction have succeeded in infiltrating our Nation’s public discourse and promoting anti-Semitic propaganda while silencing dissent through intimidation and in some cases, violence. This mirrors the larger movement to limit free speech across our Country – threatening great personal, professional, and financial risks to those who dissent from the prevailing view of the day. As dissent is discouraged and limited, false and misleading claims go without response and people begin to believe them and, in this case, act with violence upon those targeted in these false claims. The future of our Country depends on addressing this issue.”

6. “Across the Middle East and North Africa, Christians are persecuted and massacred, churches are destroyed, and people are forced to convert under the threat of death. We must bring attention to these wide-spread, horrific actions against Christians by taking to task the leaders of these countries for allowing these actions to spread; i.e., terminating US aid, enacting sanctions, and even potential military strikes. Only from a position of strength can we stop these horrific actions and make the region safe for all individuals – regardless of religious belief. Leaders of these nations must realize that they’ll be held accountable for their actions.”

**Amy Kennedy** (D): Did not respond.

(I) **Jeff Van Drew** (R): Did not respond.

### **New Jersey 3<sup>rd</sup>**

(I) **Andy Kim** (D): Did not respond.

**David Richter** (R): Did not respond.

**Methodology:** *Greater Philadelphia ZOA crafted six questions that could be answered with simple, direct responses. We emailed these six questions to each of the major-party candidates in each of six contests. For those that we were able to find a phone number for a campaign office or campaign official, we called to let them know that we were doing questionnaire and when possible to get the name, email address and phone number for the campaign manager. There were campaigns for which we were only able to locate a general email address. During the first week of October we emailed the questions, noting a deadline of October 15. The plan was to follow-up with the campaigns we did not receive responses from on October 14 to let them know that we were extending the deadline until Monday, October 19. We received a reply from one campaign the day that we emailed the questionnaire to them. Another campaign replied by 11 am on October 14. As for the remaining 10 campaigns, that day we re-emailed the questionnaire and re-called those campaigns (or staffers) for which we had a phone number. We called those who did not reply and left voice mails (except for two campaigns, where we were able to reach staffers). We called again on Friday, October 16 and again left voicemails (except for one campaign manager, whom we spoke with). A third campaign emailed their questionnaire on October 19. We believe that we gave each campaign ample notice about the questionnaire and ample opportunity to participate.*