Good evening. Thank you for having me here at the largest gathering of Americans who support the U.S.-Israel relationship!

I want to thank your great leadership, your new President Betsy Berns Korn, Board Chair Mort Fridman, Howard Kohr, Ester Kurz, and my good friend, Bob Cohen, who have dedicated themselves to strengthening the bond between the United States and Israel.

And I want to recognize your distinguished guests and all of the members of AIPAC, who keep this organization strong, especially my fellow New Yorkers. Thank you for all you do to strengthen not just Israel but the United States.

To the students who are here with us tonight, please stand up. We want to applaud you. There are more than 4,000 students here at AIPAC. God bless every one of you.
You know, I have a grandson, Noah, who is one-year-old. When he is older, I hope that he is like you—the students in the crowd today—who come here to do what you are doing now: helping educate the world about the history of our people.

Many of your peers do not know the long history and struggles of the Jewish people—why it’s so important to have a strong Israel and a strong American-Israeli relationship. But you will teach them, and, one day, God willing, my grandson will too.

Tonight, I wish to speak about my support for Israel, the need to maintain a strong bipartisan relationship, and the threats that Jewish communities across the globe are facing.

There’s no question that the state of Israel has come a long way in the past 70 years. But threats to the land of Israel and the Jewish people are growing, and have been, for some time.

The international community at the United Nations never misses an opportunity to single out Israel for condemnation.

Hamas is still intent on kidnapping and killing Israeli citizens;
An increasingly desperate Iranian regime plots to undermine Israel in every way;

Iranian proxies are operating in Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, and Syria;

And the chaos in Syria and the Middle East sits on Israel’s doorstep.

A little over a week ago, rockets landed in a playground in Sderot—a playground.

So my friends, the safety and security of Israel must always be a priority of the United States. And as long as I am a leader in the Senate, support for Israel’s security in the Senate will be non-negotiable.

But we can only hope to defend Israel from these threats so long as we maintain a united front, Democrats, and Republicans together. The winds of politics are always changing. They blow fiercely during election years like this one.
But no matter how fiercely the winds may blow, we must not let support for Israel be caught up in the maelstrom. The friendship between our two countries must be unshakeable. The friendship between our countries must be unbreakable.

Support for the friendship between our countries must not depend on which party you belong to.

No matter what: we must keep the U.S.-Israel relationship bipartisan. This has been a mission for me, and it must be for you and all friends of Israel.

So whenever I led a piece of pro-Israel legislation, even when Democrats had the majority in the House or Senate, I always included a Republican co-sponsor because the foundation of our relationship must remain bipartisan, as it has been for decades.

I’m proud that the overwhelming majority of Democrats support a strong U.S.-Israel relationship—we always have and we always will.
Of course, there are those who seek to use Israel as a way to score political points. They treat Israel as another talking point, another way to stoke resentment between the two parties in Washington.

These voices do a disservice to both Israel and the United States. Our politics may be more polarized than ever, but it is incumbent upon all of us who care about the U.S-Israel relationship to keep it bipartisan.

The relationship between the United States and Israel transcends any single political party, any single election, any single president.

Just remember: the security assistance that AIPAC champions every year is passed by both Democrats and Republicans in Congress because both parties believe that Israel must maintain a qualitative military edge to defend herself.

Iron Dome, David’s Sling, and Arrow-3 missile defense systems, all of which defend Israel from attack, are funded by both Democrats and Republicans in Congress.

The Taylor Force Act, which stops funding that directly benefits the Palestinian Authority until it ceases payments to imprisoned terrorists
or their families, was passed by Democrats and Republicans in Congress.

A resolution opposing BDS and efforts to delegitimize Israel passed the Democratically-controlled House with 398 votes, both Democrats and Republicans united.

Americans from across the political spectrum – Democrats and Republicans, liberals, conservatives, and independents – must continue to stand united in their support for Israel. It’s in America’s interest to stand with Israel!

But our ardent support for Israel does not mean that we lose sight of the goal, supported by Israeli Prime Ministers and Presidents of both parties, of two-states living side by side in peace and security.

I have no illusions about the prospects of peace at this moment in our history. I have spoken on this stage before about the history of intransigence, by Palestinian leaders and too many in the Arab world, to recognize Israel, the only Jewish state. Sadly, while progress has been made, those days are not yet behind us.
But the possibility for a two-state solution must still be maintained—a two-state solution that ensures a safe, secure, and democratic Israel can live side-by-side with a demilitarized Palestinian state that provides dignity and self-determination for the Palestinian people.

The only way such a solution can be achieved is through direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. Not by international pressure campaigns. Not by the BDS movement. Not by solutions imposed by foreign capitals.

Unilateral action taken by either side could diminish the prospects of future peace. Unilateral action might even foreclose the pathway to peace. That has always proudly been AIPAC’s position, as it should be. Real diplomacy through direct negotiations, while a long and arduous road, is the only path for a durable peace between the Israelis and Palestinians.

We must not shut the door on the peace all of us in this room want to see. We must keep that prospect alive. The Administration should resume funding to organizations that bring Israelis and Palestinians together. And I join AIPAC in
supporting bipartisan legislation by Senators Coons, Graham, Kaine, and Gardner known as the “partnership fund for peace,” which supports joint economic ventures between Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans, as well as programs that bring the next generation of Israeli’s and Palestinian’s together.

I am proud AIPAC supports these efforts. The extremists on both sides who pretend that the other side doesn’t exist, or is just going to disappear, are living in a state of denial. Together, we must always strive for a secure peace.

Just as we must continue to support our friend and ally Israel, so, too, are we called on to confront a greater and more ancient threat to the Jewish people: anti-Semitism.

The same poison that chased countless Jewish people from Europe and killed so many who remained; the same poison that scattered the Jewish people to the winds and made us foreigners in our own countries; that same poison is beginning to fester, here in America.
Over the holidays, usually a time of peace and rest with family and friends, there were several vicious attacks on Jewish communities in America.

A kosher deli in Jersey City was the target of a mass shooting that wounded seven and claimed the lives of three Jews, including a prominent rabbi in my home borough of Brooklyn. Not two weeks later, on the seventh night of Hanukkah, a man attacked a gathering of orthodox Jews in Monsey, New York, with a machete.

These are only the latest examples of a rising tide of anti-Semitic violence in America, anti-Semitic violence that his visited synagogues from Pittsburgh to Poway, California; anti-Semitic violence on our streets and in our schools; anti-Semitic violence at the home of a Rabbi on a quiet Hanukkah night.

My friends, the rise of anti-Semitism in the United States is a national crisis.

I do not use those words lightly.
The history of anti-Semitism in the world has taught us to appreciate what America has meant to the Jewish people, and how much better things are here than elsewhere in the world. But the people of our faith have learned hard lessons about how anti-Semitism and violence against Jews walk hand in hand.

We have learned hard lessons about how anti-Semitism thrives in societies where bigotry goes unchecked, where the idea of Truth is questioned, and where propaganda and conspiracy theories flourish. We have learned hard lessons about how, when people of goodwill and good faith are silent or dismissive, anti-Semitism grows and gathers force.

In Germany in the 20s and early 30s, when the Nazis began their long campaign of violence and dehumanization against the Jews of Germany, too many in Europe and too many in America were silent. Too many called them isolated incidents or causes for concern but did not speak up forcefully. And we all know what happened.

There are so many differences between our age and the 1920s and 1930s, thank God, but we have learned that anti-Semitism, unchallenged and unbridled, will grow and gather strength.
We cannot, and must not, allow anti-Semitism to gather any more strength, and we must do all we can to protect our vulnerable institutions.

So on this stage, surrounded by friends of Israel and the Jewish people, I call on Congress to quadruple—quadruple—funding to protect at-risk synagogues, shuls, and other houses of worship where our families gather—to provide hardened security so this will never happen again.

And I need your support to tell members of Congress how important this is.

My friend Chairwoman Lowey has been such a strong supporter of this program (and for Israel), and I want to thank her again tonight.

In a time of moral emergency, in the 20s and 30s, too few spoke up and did what was necessary to face down anti-Semitism. We will not make the same mistake.
We will educate the next generation about what can happen when we forget the past. A genocide not properly remembered can lead to another.

That’s why I’m proud to support the “Never Again” Education Act, led by Senator Rosen and Lankford in the Senate, which expands and authorizes new resources for Holocaust education in our schools.

I will work to pass this bill through Congress and show the world that America will never forget the painful lessons of the Shoah.

My friends, this will be a difficult year. The fires of partisanship already burn brightly, and a national election will douse fuel on those flames.

We must never—never—let that partisanship poison the bipartisan support Israel has always enjoyed.

We must never—never—let support for Israel be sharpened into just another partisan shiv, another tool in the arsenal of political ad peddlers and party strategists. That, surely, is the path to ruin.
The Jewish State of Israel has been able to count on the support of the United States from the days it drew its very first breath when President Truman became the first to recognize Eretz Yisrael as a member of the family of nations. It was another Democratic president, President Kennedy, who said that “Friendship for Israel is not a partisan matter. It is a national commitment.”

Those words, that national commitment, has inspired me my whole life.

From the time I listened on my radio to the newscasts of the Six Days War, praying to Hashem that Israel would survive;

To the time I listened to my predecessor in the Senate, Senator Moynihan, go before the United Nations as our Ambassador to defend Zionism and condemn the hypocrisy of the UN;

Up until this very moment…I have never once doubted the commitment of our nation to the support of Israel.

I intend to keep it that way.
My friends, we are going to have work to do. But Israel, the small sliver of land that has represented the hopes of the Jewish people for over two millennia, is worth the effort.

And I swear to you that as long as I am Democratic leader,

as long as Hashem breathes air into my lungs,

I will do everything in my power to maintain the unshakeable, unbreakable friendship between the United States and Israel.

Am Yisroel Chai. The Jewish people live. Long may they live. Thank you, AIPAC!