Thank you. It is an honor to be back at AIPAC.

I want to congratulate incoming President Betsy Korn and thank outgoing President Mort Fridman for their leadership.

I also want to thank Howard Kohr for his tireless advocacy and for extending the invitation for me to address this important audience.

For decades, we saw a broad and bipartisan consensus in support of Israel in America.

Unfortunately, that consensus is under attack like never before. The United States is on the cusp of an anti-Israel movement gaining real political power.

Just look at what is happening tonight.

While we are here defending democracy, Bernie Sanders is boycotting AIPAC.

Instead of standing with Israel, he is campaigning with Congress’s most vocal supporters of the vile BDS movement.

In fact, at this very moment, one of them is getting ready to headline Bernie’s rally in Minnesota.

She is the same person who introduced a pro-BDS resolution in Congress last year, who says Israel’s supporters have “dual loyalty,” whose anti-Semitic actions caused her own party to draft a resolution to condemn her, and who attacked me for defending Israel, saying it is “all about the Benjamins.”

You may know her as Congresswoman Ilhan Omar.
We, the friends of Israel, must hold the line and beat back the dangerous trend of blaming Israel.

So when AIPAC is falsely accused of bigotry, we are right to call it out.

Because we know what AIPAC really stands for:

AIPAC stands for unity.

AIPAC stands for security.

AIPAC stands for hope.

That is why I will always stand with AIPAC --- proudly, persistently, and unapologetically.

I guarantee each and every one of you this: as long as I am in Congress, I will never be silent about my support for Israel.

To every one of the 18,000 citizen activists in the audience --- I want to say thank you!

Thank you for your passion. Thank you for your dedication.

I know AIPAC doesn’t rate or endorse, but I endorse you and what you're doing.

The people in this room may come from different backgrounds and support different political parties. But each of us shares a common goal.

That is why we are here.

Tonight, I want to focus on America’s special relationship with Israel.

Despite the growing influence of the vocal minority who would abandon it, I believe our special relationship is unwavering, precious, and worth protecting.

Let me address several pillars:
The first pillar is that it transcends political ideologies.

Our friendship with Israel is rooted in national security concerns. But it is also our rooted in shared values such as sovereignty.

For some reason, in violation of all common sense, Israel is condemned more than any other country by the so-called global community.

Let me say that again: A responsible, democratic nation with the rule of law is rebuked more than dictators, simply for asserting its unquestionable right to be safe in its homeland.

If that isn’t morally backwards, nothing is.

This may sound obvious, but it needs to be said: Israel has a right to defend itself from missiles, and bombs, and tunnels, and knife attacks.

The United States should let the world know where we stand.

But how can America ensure we never abandon our closest friend in the Middle East?

It’s up to Congress first. We have a responsibility to understand our alliance from every angle.

And the best way to do that is to go to Israel with other Members --- including from the other party.

That is why I’ve visited five times in ten years with 189 Republican members of Congress.

It is also why I work closely with my friend Steny Hoyer to make sure our trips are bipartisan.

I’m proud to report that last year’s trip brought over 15 percent of the entire House of Representatives to Israel at the same time.

That is something to celebrate.
These trips build comradery across the aisle on Israel and beyond. They benefit decision-makers and decision-making. That is their greatest value.

Members tell me it is the most impactful trip they’ve ever taken.

The second pillar of our special relationship is that it is mutually beneficial.

We see this not only in the realm of national security, but also domestic issues.

In California, navigating water shortages is a reality for our residents, livelihood, and productivity.

Our friends in Israel faced similar circumstances --- until recently, Israel was considered to be a water-deficient country.

It was not uncommon for residents to hear regular reminders of the need to preserve water.

This problem lasted for decades, until the innovation of the Israeli people broke through.

Smart technology and policies transformed Israel from one of the driest nations on Earth to what some describe as a “water superpower.”

During my last trip, California Republicans and Democrats delegation members came together to learn and hopefully bring this technology back to our own state and country.

It was actually the first time I’ve seen California members talk about our water issues without fighting. It seemed like a miracle.

But as the first Prime Minister of Israel once quipped, “if you don’t believe in miracles here, you aren’t a realist.”

My point is this: the United States and Israel are united by more than military cooperation.
Working together on science and technology is another way our relationship is beneficial to American interests and provides for greater security.

That is why Congress is working to expand security assistance to Israel to include non-military cooperation.

The third pillar of our special relationship is that it is a priority.

The Trump Administration has proven this sentiment time and again.

Weeks before his inauguration, President Trump announced his intention to relocate the U.S. Embassy to its rightful home in Jerusalem.

Previous presidents talked about it. This President acted. And so the Embassy moved.

Some predicted the move would lead to chaos. They were wrong.

The President’s recently announced Middle East Peace Plan is another example of our unwavering commitment.

Past administrations have shied away from this complex issue. President Trump leaned in.

His plan offers a pathway to a brighter future. It is a significant step toward that universally-desired goal of peace and stability on just and fair terms.

It should be seriously considered by everyone.

Then there is the UN’s arms embargo on Iran --- which expires on the 47th anniversary of the October War. If that happens, the consequences would be steep.

In the interest of preventing more violence, the embargo must be extended. And once it is, America and all peaceful nations must redouble our efforts to ensure it is vigorously enforced.

All of these actions send a simple message to our Israeli friends:
America will never set conditions on Israeli security assistance.

America will always have Israel’s back on the world stage.

America will not revoke our commitments or renounce our values.

And most importantly, America reaffirms our unbreakable bond.

The final pillar of our special relationship is that it is enduring.

Our ties began only eleven minutes after Israeli independence, when the United States was the first nation to recognize the State of Israel.

Since then, we’ve built a bilateral relationship almost without comparison.

Together, we built a robust security alliance to protect our citizens and stabilize the Middle East.

Together, we built new technology to grow our economies and strengthen the middle class.

Together, we built vibrant democracies to practice our beliefs and pursue happiness.

America is grateful for our friendship with Israel. We are a better nation because of it. And we must never shy away from defending it.

It is our responsibility to pass it along to the next generation. That is the only way it will survive.

Ronald Reagan said that “freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on.”

The same applies to our bond with Israel.

Friends --- We cannot allow those who accuse AIPAC of bigotry and “dual loyalty” to smear us and the special relationship we fight for every day.

Our mission is too important to let them succeed.
Now is no time for silence.

More than ever --- we need your strong voices walking the halls of Congress.

More than ever --- we need your clear support for Israel and your opposition to anti-Semitism made clear to any candidate who seeks your support.

More than ever --- the future of our special relationship depends on you.

Our task is to maintain American support for Israel in both parties.

And know this --- you have my complete and unshakeable commitment.

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