

Statement of Keith Lustig
Federalism Committee
Ohio House of Representatives
October 23, 2019

Good morning Chairman Becker, Vice Chair Stoltzfus, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Federalism Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in regards to House Concurrent Resolution Number 11, which upon review, provides acknowledgement and affirmation that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. I would also like to thank Representative George Lang, Ohio District 52, for his support and co-sponsorship of H.C.R. No. 11.

For context, I would like to provide you with a brief historical overview on Israel and the city of Jerusalem. After World War I, the Allied Supreme council (Britain, France, Italy and Japan) held a meeting in Sanremo Italy on April 19, 1920. The purpose of the meeting was to determine the allocation of "Class A" League of Nations mandates for the proper administration of three Ottoman territories in the Middle East. One of which was Palestine. The outcome of the San Remo meeting was that title over Jerusalem and its Old City was granted to the Jewish people. The rights granted at San Remo included recognition of the historical connection of the Jewish people and Jerusalem, and the right to establish this city as their ancient capital. Subsequently, in 1922 the "British Mandate for Palestine and Transjordan" was approved by the League of Nations.

On May 14, 1948, President Harry Truman recognized the provisional government of Israel as having de facto authority over the new Jewish state. De-jure recognition of the Jewish state was extended on January 31, 1949.

Immediately after President Truman's formal recognition of Israel the Arab-Israeli war between Egypt, Syria and Transjordan commenced. As a result of the conflict, Transjordan took control and illegally annexed and occupied East Jerusalem and the Old City.

In 1967, Israel reclaimed the land from Transjordan during the Six-Day War. Israel did not abdicate or relinquish their international rights or title to Jerusalem and the Old City during Trans-Jordan's occupation.

In 1990, Congress unanimously adopted Senate Concurrent Resolution 196 which declares that the Congress "strongly believes that Jerusalem must remain an undivided city in which the rights of every ethnic and religious group are protected."

In 1995, during the 104th Congress, (S. 1322 – 104th Congress – Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995) was Introduced and was passed on October 24, 1995. The "Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995" acknowledged that; (1) each sovereign nation, under international law and custom, may designate its own capital. (2) Since 1950, the city of Jerusalem has been the capital of the State of Israel and (3) by 1996, The State of Israel will celebrate the 3,000th anniversary of the Jewish presence in Jerusalem since King David's entry. Ohio Senator Dewine, and Senator Glen both voted in favor of S. 1322, and the U.S. House of Representatives from Ohio voted 15-2, on a bipartisan basis, to approve. Congressional representatives from Ohio in total, overwhelmingly passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995. The United States government and the State of Ohio have consistently supported Israel and its claim on Jerusalem as its ancient capital.

Subsequently, on December 6, 2017 the President of the United States of America officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Israel, and authorized the move of the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem. The international community has not supported this decision, and they have raised concerns about the likelihood of increased violence in the Middle East. To date, after a number of unfortunate incidents in Gaza in early 2018, we have not seen an increase in the severity or frequency of conflicts as predicted. Even after understanding the threat of violence, 69% of Jews polled believed that moving the U.S. Embassy should not be delayed.

Unfortunately, during the last few years we have seen an increase in anti-Semitism both domestically and internationally. I believe that the BDS (Boycott, Divest and Sanction) movement has contributed to anti-Semitism, especially on college campuses. It has been reported by the Anti-Defamation League that there were 520 anti-Israel events on college campuses last year, half of which had BDS components. This type of activity within our communities and college campuses does not promote a healthy dialogue or tolerance but leads to antagonism, and future conflict. Over the last hundred years the Jewish people have been subjected to pogroms in Russia, Germany, Ireland, Wales, Argentina, and Poland. It is my hope that passage of this resolution will help to promote positive engagement and dialogue in the State of Ohio which ultimately reduces anti-Semitism and minimizes the risk of future conflict.

I believe that the resolution before you today further supports and strengthens our relationship with the government of Israel and its people. The U.S.-Israeli alliance contributes militarily, economically, politically and most importantly to our national security. This is important nationally as well as to the State of Ohio. Israel continues to help the United States with security threats and shares intelligence information on terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and political trends and dynamics of Middle East politics. Our two governments have worked together to develop sophisticated military technology and Israel is emerged as an important niche defense supplier to the U.S. military. I believe our efforts to strengthen our relationship, both on the state and national level, is in our mutual self-interest.

Israeli companies know that the United States is the partner of choice with respect to market development, technology transfer, and investment. Israeli civilian technological innovations help to maintain U.S. competitiveness, promote sustainable development, and address our national security challenges. Ohio has the potential to expand exports and promote more international investment from Israel based upon recent statistics. Ohio exports to Israel amounted to approximately 1.6% of total exports from the United States in 2018 (Ohio Exports Report: 2018 – July 2019). Israel's net investment in Ohio amounts to 11 establishments with a combined work force of 781 employees (International Corporate Investment in Ohio Operations – June 2019). I believe that the State of Ohio can benefit from closer ties and recognition of our mutual interests. This resolution will hopefully provide a springboard for collaboration and opportunity and further strengthen ties that will benefit our state.

Peace in the Middle East has been a priority since 1948. Numerous U.S. administrations have worked to develop a solution to the issues and conflict. Unfortunately, there is no short term solution based upon the negotiating strategies that have been implemented to date. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley stated in May of 2018 that moving our embassy "reflects our sovereign right to decide the location of our embassy. Importantly, moving our embassy to Jerusalem also reflects the reality that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel.... Recognizing this reality makes real peace more achievable, not less." In which I am in full agreement.

In closing, this resolution provides the opportunity to recognize an important friend and ally in the Middle East. I believe the State of Ohio will realize many tangible and intangible benefits by taking this step and I ask for your full support and passage of H.C.R. No. 11. Mr. Chairman and members of the Federalism committee, thank you for your time and consideration.