

Practical Guide to Organizing Home District Meetings

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I Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this guide

This is a practical guide designed to assist Brit Tzedek v'Shalom (**Brit Tzedek**) chapter organizers coordinate home district meetings with local Congress members (Representatives and Senators).

It contains a step-by-step guide to all aspects of the organization process. It also includes a **comprehensive appendix** containing background information about Brit Tzedek, the current political situation, Congress member voting records and the Congressional process. Additionally, the guide contains a number of templates for correspondence, reports, etc.

The guide is designed to **make your experience with home district meetings as easy and smooth** as possible.

Why meet with congress-members at advocacy meetings?

One of the most effective ways to influence US foreign policy is by educating members of Congress and encouraging them to promote positive U.S. engagement in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking through sponsoring for relevant resolutions/bills and letters to Congress, the president or Secretary of State and influencing decisions and policy during caucus meetings.

As constituents, we are in an especially good position both to influence the leaders who represent us and to provide them with support for taking positions on a negotiated two-state peace that are not yet those of the majority. As Jews, we are the key constituency for backing on Middle East issues in most districts. Jewish leaders with significant constituencies, e.g. rabbis, community leaders, etc. are especially valuable as constituents representing our message, because they also have a following who look to their leaders for support.

Goals of a Home District Advocacy meeting

- To build a relationship with the Congressperson and/or their staffer;
- To introduce them to Brit Tzedek and its general position;
- To relay the views of Brit Tzedek BT members/supporters from their constituency;
- To influence their thinking on our issue; and
- To ask for something specific (if appropriate)

For an overview of the congressional process, see [Appendix 1](#).

Your role as a chapter organizer

As home district meeting organizer, your responsibilities may include:

- Setting up meetings, organizing and preparing a delegation;
- Overseeing the meeting;
- Reporting back on the meeting; and
- Making recommendations for developing/maintaining an ongoing relationship with the member of Congress (e.g. frequency of contact, follow-up materials, who to call when relevant legislation is pending, etc).

II Preparing for home district meetings

Forming your congressional delegation

Much care must be taken in forming your delegation. For Home District meetings, it is preferable that all

delegation members be constituents, with the exception of Brit Tzedek staff, chapter leaders, or chapter advocacy organizers.

The “perfect” delegation might include:

- Diversity (age, gender, etc.) \;
- Brit Tzedek members able to articulately represent our positions;
- Prominent and/or active members of the Jewish community, business or community leaders, etc.;
- Rabbis and Cantors working or living in the district; and
- Donors to the Congress member’s campaign.

However, this is not always possible. Do your best and be appreciative of everyone who has volunteered their time.

Assign the role of delegation leader to one of the members. The leader’s responsibilities include:

- Introducing the team;
- Keeping the meeting flowing smoothly;
- Answering the ‘tough questions’ – alternatively, you may want to assign that role to someone else; and
- Keeping an eye on the strategy of the particular Congressperson (Democrat or Republican, other issues happening in the District, etc.).

The rest of the participants should be good team-members, keep the conversation moving forward, be ready to step in if called upon and relate personal stories & connections (to the Representative, to Israel, etc.).

Knowing your Congress member and the staffers who work with her/him

In order to influence your Congress member’s position it important to get to know the member as well as their staff who can get you into the office and affect the policy decisions of their boss. Review your member’s voting history, comments made about the Middle East, personal interests, etc. Learn about their relationships in Congress and with constituents. Who do they look to for leadership on Middle East issues or other issues? If they are Democrat, will they fully back President Obama’s leadership on Mideast peace? Have they ever visited Israel? Do they have a genuine interest in the topic? Get to know about their personal life, their family, hobbies and any other relevant information that may facilitate the development of a stronger relationship.

This generally applies to your Congress member’s staffers who are often even more important to win over than the actual member. Kindness, appreciation, and a genuine interest in them can go a long way to get you access and influence. Who is your Representative’s legislative director responsible for recommending foreign policy positions? Who is the chief of staff responsible for?

Most importantly, when legislation is pending, how can you best affect the member’s vote—a call to the legislative director, 10 phone calls to the office, 5 personal letters, 1000 Action Alert messages, etc.

Scheduling the meeting

Every member of Congress has one or more offices in his or her congressional district. Most members of Congress regularly return to their districts and hold meetings with their constituents. The best time to arrange meetings with home district meetings is during their breaks when they are most likely to be home.

Representatives tend to be in their home district during the months of August, December and early June. They also visit on Friday afternoons, weekends and Monday. Send requests for meetings two weeks before they are scheduled to return home.

- **Contact details:** To contact Representatives or find their nearest office to you, visit <http://www.house.gov/house/MemberWWW.shtml>. To contact incumbent Senators or find their nearest office to you, visit http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm. Call the DC office of your member of Congress through the Capitol Hill switchboard at (202) 224-3121.

- **Find out who handles scheduling:** You can call the member’s Washington, D.C., office through the Capitol switchboard at 202 224-3121, or call the district office and ask for the name of the person who handles in-district scheduling requests and **ask for their fax number**.
- **Request the meeting:** Send a fax requesting a meeting and **address it to the meeting scheduler**. Keep in mind that officials have very busy schedules, so it is recommended that you ask to meet with them for only a 15-30 minute time slot.. See **Appendix 5** for a Meeting Request Template.
- **Confirmation:** Be sure to **confirm receipt of the request** a few days after you have sent the fax.

Preparing for the advocacy meeting

Prepare a thorough plan for the meeting and **circulate it** to all members of the delegation **well in advance** of the meeting. See **Appendix 6** for an example of Advocacy Meeting outline.

- **Assign roles** to each member of the delegation, for example, who will answer which questions, etc.
- Determine **what your talking points** will be and when you will raise them. See **appendix 7** for examples of talking points raised by Brit Tzedek .
- Ensure you are thoroughly familiar with Brit Tzedek’s perspectives and able to provide a brief background on the organization, on the Middle East and on any political developments, if necessary. See **Appendix 8** for background information on Brit Tzedek.
- Have **pre-prepared answers** to questions the representative may ask. See **Appendix 9** for a list of frequently asked questions and pre-prepared answers.

Prepare a resource folder for the congress-member, which contains background information about Brit-Tzedek, the current political situation and the policies we are requesting. Ensure that all delegation members have a copy of, or are at least familiar with, the contents of the folder.

III The Advocacy Meeting:

How do we make our meetings successful?

- **Be professional** - Arrive 5 minutes early for your meeting and be patient if you are delayed. Remember to dress in casual business attire, and wear a Brit Tzedek pin if you have one.
- **Follow the delegation leader** - Each delegation will have one person designated as the group leader whose role is to introduce the group, assign roles to each participant, and orchestrate the conversation. Never argue with each other during an Advocacy Meeting.
- **Be short and focused in your comments** - Our goal is to develop and nurture an ongoing supportive relationship with the Congressperson’s office in a brief period of time. Convey our message and find out where the Congressperson stands on the issues as efficiently as possible. It’s better if we talk less, and they talk more. Leave time for them to ask questions.
- **Stay “on message”** - Brit Tzedek’s effectiveness is dependent on the unity of our message. If you are a member of an Advocacy delegation, you are a representative of Brit Tzedek. All members of the delegation need to stick to our talking points.
- **Be flexible** - Meetings are unpredictable. The Congressperson and/or staff person may be running late and need to cut down the length of the meeting. Be flexible with your plan while keeping your focus on Brit Tzedek talking points. You may get a staff member with no knowledge on our issue or one who wants to talk about their own feelings and concerns.
- **Make sure you leave time for an “ask” if there is one:** will you sign this resolution? Will you support President Obama? etc.

Listen carefully and be attentive

The Congressperson or staff member may convey information directly and in clear language or indirectly and by what is not said. Watch their body language for clues. Pay attention to when they take notes and what questions

are most important to them. **It's more important to listen carefully than to say every last thing that you had intended to say.**

Be polite and friendly

Your goal is to develop an ongoing and respectful relationship, even if there is disagreement. Do not interrupt or argue with the Congressperson or staff member. If he or she says something you disagree with, try to ask questions, bring in your own personal experience, or pointing out areas of commonality. Keep the conversation casual and personalize wherever appropriate.

IV Brit Tzedek Advocacy Meeting Follow-up

Debriefing

Touch base with your delegation after the meeting to debrief. What do people think went well? What is your group assessment of the kind of support we can count on from this office? What follow-up does your delegation recommend? Who would like to participate in future home district meetings?

Thank the Congress-member/staffer

Promptly send a gracious email thank you note to the staffer/Congressmember. If you promised to get additional information to the Congressional office, make sure you do so either in this thank-you or within the next 48 hours.

Summary Report

Send a summary report to the Brit Tzedek DC office. The report should include:

- date of meeting;
- who was in attendance from Brit Tzedek; and
- the member's office, contact information. for Congressmember/staff;
- overall assessment of meeting,;
- points of agreement/disagreement, and
- suggested follow-up.

Chapter Listserv

Write a brief report for the chapter leader listserv, keeping in mind that you are providing substantive information to other chapters and inspiring them to reach out to their own Congress-people.

Delegate thank you

The group leader should send a thank you note to other members of the delegation. You can never thank a volunteer too much.

Resources And Appendices

Appendix 1: Role of Committees in Senate and House

House of Representative Committees include:

a. (1) U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs/ House Foreign Affairs Committee - jurisdiction over bills and investigations related to the foreign affairs of the United States including:

- Foreign assistance.
- National security developments affecting foreign policy, peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and enforcement of United Nations or other international sanctions.
- War powers, treaties, executive agreements, and the deployment and use of United States Armed Forces.
- Arms control and disarmament issues.
- The United States Agency for International Development.
- Strategic planning and agreements, and activities and policies of the State, Commerce and Defense Departments and other agencies related to the Arms Export Control Act, and the Foreign Assistance Act including export and licensing policy for munitions items and technology and dual-use equipment and technology.
- International law, promotion of democracy and international law enforcement issues, including narcotics control programs and activities.
- Public diplomacy, including international communication, information policy, international education, and cultural programs; and all other matters not specifically assigned to a subcommittee.

b. (2) The United States House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia - This is a subcommittee within the House Foreign Affairs Committee. As a regional subcommittee, its jurisdiction includes:

- Matters affecting the political relations between the United States and other countries and regions, including resolutions or other legislative measures directed to such relations.
- Legislation with respect to disaster assistance outside the Foreign Assistance Act, boundary issues, and international claims.
- Legislation with respect to region- or country-specific loans or other financial relations outside the Foreign Assistance Act.
- Resolutions of disapproval under section 36(b) of the Arms Export Control Act, with respect to foreign military sales.
- Legislation and oversight regarding human rights practices in particular countries.
- Oversight of matters related to the regional activities of the United Nations, of its affiliated agencies, and of other multilateral institutions.

- Identification and development of options for meeting future problems and issues relating to U.S. interests in the region.
- Base rights and other facilities access agreements and regional security pacts.
- Oversight of matters relating to parliamentary conferences and exchanges involving the region.
- Concurrent oversight jurisdiction with respect to matters assigned to the functional subcommittees insofar as they may affect the region.
- Oversight of all foreign assistance activities affecting the region.

c. (3) Appropriations Committee

- Has broad responsibility over the federal budget with respect to making appropriations
- Within the Appropriations committee are a number of subcommittees. These are the subcommittees relevant to US foreign Policy on the Middle East: Defense, Homeland Security, Select Intelligence Oversight Panel (Subcommittee on Terrorism/HUMINT, Analysis and Counterintelligence
- Subcommittee on Technical and Tactical Intelligence
- Subcommittee on Intelligence Community Management
- Military Construction, VA, State and Foreign Operations.

d. (4) Armed Services Committee: the committee has special oversight functions with respect to international arms control and disarmament and the education of military dependents in schools. Responsibilities also include:

- The Department of Defense generally, including the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force generally.
- Strategic and critical materials necessary for the common defense.
- Tactical intelligence and intelligence related activities of the Department of Defense.
- National security aspects of merchant marine, including financial assistance for the construction and operation of vessels, the maintenance of the U.S. shipbuilding and ship repair industrial base, cabotage, cargo preference, and merchant marine officers and seamen as these matters relate to national security.
- Ammunition depots; forts; arsenals; Army, Navy, and Air Force reservations and establishments.
- Conservation, development, and use of naval petroleum and oil shale reserves.
- Interoceanic canals generally, including measures relating to the maintenance, operation, and administration of interoceanic canals.
- Military applications of nuclear energy.
- Scientific research and development in support of the armed services.
- Size and composition of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force.
- Soldiers' and sailors' homes.

e. (5) House Select Committee on Intelligence – responsibilities include:

- Overseeing and making continuing studies of the intelligence activities and programs of the United States Government, and to submit to the Senate appropriate proposals for legislation and report to the Senate concerning such intelligence activities and programs.
- To provide vigilant legislative oversight over the intelligence activities of the United States to assure that such activities are in conformity with the Constitution and laws of the United States.
- Includes a subcommittee on Terrorism, Analysis and Counterintelligence, Subcommittee on Technical and Tactical Intelligence and Subcommittee on Intelligence Community Management

Senate Committees:

f. (1) Senate Foreign Relations Committee

- The Foreign Relations Committee is generally responsible for overseeing (but not administering) and funding foreign aid programs as well as funding, arms sales and training for national allies.
- This committee is responsible for overseeing the foreign policy agencies of the U.S. government, including the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and the Peace Corps. The Committee reviews and considers all diplomatic nominations and international treaties, as well as legislation relating to U.S. foreign policy.
- This is more powerful than its House counterpart because it can consider the ratification of treaties and the confirmation of presidential appointments, such as are made for ambassador and Secretary of State.

g. (2) Senate Armed Services Committee

- It is charged with leading foreign-policy legislation and debate in the Senate. The Foreign Relations Committee is generally responsible for overseeing (but not administering) and funding foreign aid programs as well as funding, arms sales and training for national allies.
- Empowered with legislative oversight of the nation's military, including the Department of Defense, military research and development, nuclear energy (as pertaining to national security), benefits for members of the military, the Selective Service System and other matters related to defense policy.
- The committee is also responsible for holding confirmation hearings for the position of Secretary of State. The committee has considered, debated, and reported important treaties and legislation, ranging from the purchase of Alaska in 1867 to the establishment of the United Nations in 1945. It also holds jurisdiction over all diplomatic nominations.

h. (3) Senate Intelligence Committee

- The United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (sometimes referred to as SSCI) is dedicated to overseeing the United States Intelligence Community—the agencies and bureaus of the Federal government of the United States who provide information and analysis for leaders of the executive and legislative branches.
- The Committee is "select" in that membership is temporary and rotated among members of the chamber.
- As part of its oversight responsibilities, the Committee performs an annual review of the intelligence budget submitted by the President and prepares legislation authorizing appropriations for the various civilian and military agencies and departments comprising the Intelligence Community. The Committee also conducts periodic investigations, audits, and inspections of intelligence activities and programs.
- to oversee and make continuing studies of the intelligence activities and programs of the United States Government, and to submit to the Senate appropriate proposals for legislation and report to the Senate concerning such intelligence activities and programs.
- In carrying out this purpose, the Select Committee on Intelligence shall make every effort to assure that the appropriate departments and agencies of the United States provide informed and timely intelligence necessary for the executive and legislative branches to

make sound decisions affecting the security and vital interests of the Nation. It is further the purpose of this resolution to provide vigilant legislative oversight over the intelligence activities of the United States to assure that such activities are in conformity with the Constitution and laws of the United States.

i. (4) Senate Appropriations Committee

- The Senate Appropriations Committee is the largest committee in the U.S. Senate, and its role is to pass laws for the appropriation of funds from the Federal treasury.
- The committee writes the legislation that allocates federal funds to the numerous government agencies, departments, and organizations on an annual basis.
- Appropriations are limited to the levels set by a Budget Resolution, drafted by the Senate Budget Committee.
- The Appropriation's subcommittees draft legislation to allocate funds to government agencies within their jurisdictions. These subcommittees are responsible for reviewing the President's budget request, hearing testimony from government officials, and drafting the spending plans for the coming fiscal year.
- The Committee is also responsible for supplemental spending bills, which are sometimes needed in the middle of a fiscal year to compensate for emergency expenses.

Appendix 2: Understanding the Legislative Process

a. Bills, Resolutions and Dear Colleague Letters:

There are a number of instruments that yield action in Congress. They are resolutions, bills and 'Dear Colleague Letters'. Resolutions are a form of legislation that is voted on by congress but is not binding and therefore not signed into law. Bills are binding legislation. Congress members sign onto bills. Dear Collgue letters are generally initiated by one or two Congress members with a particular agenda and then circulated amongst their colleagues to sign as a way of cultivating support for a particular policy agenda. Such letters are an effective tool to use to create a certain environment in Congress, laying foundation for the support of actual bills. Letters often generate the most momentum because they have deadlines, set by the person who initiated the letter. The deadline for Bills and Resolutions is the end of the Congressional session, and therefore take longer to generate change.

b. How Bills and resolutions are passed

Anyone may draft a bill, but only members of Congress can introduce legislation. When members of Congress do so, they become its sponsor. There are four basic types of legislation:

- Bills
- Joint resolutions
- Concurrent resolutions
- Simple resolutions

The official legislative process begins when a bill or resolution is numbered—H.R. signifies a House bill, and S. a Senate bill. It is then referred to a committee and printed by the Government Printing Office.

Step 1. Referral To Committee:

With few exceptions, bills are referred to standing committees in the House or Senate according to carefully delineated rules of procedure.

Step 2. Committee Action:

When a bill reaches a committee it is placed on the committee's calendar. A bill can be referred to a subcommittee or considered by the committee as a whole. It is at this point that a bill is examined carefully and its chances for passage are determined. If the committee does not act on a bill, it is the equivalent of killing it.

Step 3. Subcommittee Review:

Often, bills are referred to a subcommittee for study and hearings. Hearings provide the opportunity to put on the record the views of the executive branch, experts, other public officials, supporters and opponents of the legislation. Testimony can be given in person or submitted as a written statement.

Step 4. Mark Up:

When the hearings are completed, the subcommittee may meet to "mark up" the bill, that is, make changes and amendments prior to recommending the bill to the full committee. If a subcommittee votes not to report legislation to the full committee, the bill dies.

Step 5. Committee Action To Report A Bill:

After receiving a subcommittee's report on a bill, the full committee can conduct further study and hearings, or it can vote on the subcommittee's recommendations and any proposed amendments. The full committee then votes on its recommendation to the House or Senate. This procedure is called "ordering a bill reported."

Step 6. Publication Of A Written Report:

After a committee votes to have a bill reported, the committee chairman instructs staff to prepare a written report on the bill. This report describes the intent and scope of the legislation, impact on existing laws and programs, position of the executive branch, and views of dissenting members of the committee.

Step 7. Scheduling Floor Action:

After a bill is reported back to the chamber where it originated, it is placed in chronological order on the calendar. In the House there are several different legislative calendars, and the Speaker and majority leader largely determine if, when, and in what order bills come up. In the Senate there is only one legislative calendar.

Step 8. Debate:

When a bill reaches the floor of the House or Senate, there are rules or procedures governing the debate on legislation. These rules determine the conditions and amount of time allocated for general debate.

Step 9. Voting:

After the debate and the approval of any amendments, the bill is passed or defeated by the members voting.

Step 10. Referral To Other Chamber:

When a bill is passed by the House or the Senate it is referred to the other chamber where it usually follows the same route through committee and floor action. This chamber may approve the bill as received, reject it, ignore it, or change it.

Step 11. Conference Committee Action:

If only minor changes are made to a bill by the other chamber, it is common for the legislation to go back to the first chamber for concurrence. However, when the actions of the other chamber significantly alter the bill, a conference committee is formed to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate versions. If the conferees are unable to reach agreement, the legislation dies. If agreement is reached, a conference report is prepared describing the committee members recommendations for changes. Both the House and the Senate must approve of the conference report.

Step 12. Final Actions:

After a bill has been approved by both the House and Senate in identical form, it is sent to the President. If the President approves of the legislation he signs it and it becomes law. Or, the President can take no action for ten days, while Congress is in session, and it automatically becomes law. If the President opposes the bill he can veto it; or, if he takes no action after the Congress has adjourned its second session, it is a "pocket veto" and the legislation dies.

Step 13. Overriding A Veto:

If the President vetoes a bill, Congress may attempt to "override the veto." This requires a two thirds roll call vote of the members who are present in sufficient numbers for a quorum.

(source: <http://www.birf.info/advocacy/understanding-leg-pro.html>)

Appendix 3: Common District Office Staff functions:

Each office differs with respect to the division of staff responsibilities. Some common positions may include

- **Administrative Assistant or Chief of Staff** – usually reports to member of congress directly and oversees office operations, including the assignment of work.
- **Legislative Director, Legislative Director, Senior Legislative Assistant, or Legislative Coordinator** – monitors the legislative schedule and makes recommendations regarding the pros and cons of particular issues. Some offices may delegate different legislative assistants for different issues.
- **Press Secretary or Communications Director** – maintains communication between the member, his/her constituency, and the general public.
- **Appointment Secretary, Personal Secretary, or Scheduler:** responsible for allocating a member's time among the many demands that arise from congressional responsibilities, staff requirements, and constituent requests. It is important **to maintain a good relationship** with the scheduler.
- **Caseworker** – addresses specific problems in the members constituency

Appendix 4: Meeting Request Template

Dear [SCHEDULER'S NAME],

I am writing to request a meeting between [REP/SEN. NAME OF REP/SEN] and a delegation of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom leaders in [CITY OR STATE].

As you may know, Brit Tzedek v'Shalom, the Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace, is a national organization of nearly 50,000 American Jews deeply committed to Israel's well-being through the achievement of a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We call on the United States to work urgently to reach a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

A delegation of Brit Tzedek's [CITY OR STATE] leadership and activists would like to personally meet with the [REPRESENTATIVE/SENATOR] to talk to [HER/HIM] about the ways we believe our government can best assist Israelis and Palestinians in realizing their dreams for peace and security amidst the current turmoil. Brit Tzedek has a network of nearly [FILL IN NUMBER OF SUPPORTERS] in the [CONGRESSMAN'S/CONGRESSWOMAN'S] district and over [FILL IN NUMBER] in the State of [STATE].

Would you be so kind as contact me on [PHONE NUMBER] or email me at [X@X.COM] to schedule the meeting between [REP/SEN. NAME] and our delegation?

Sincerely,

[FILL IN]

Deepa Domansky

Advocacy Coordinator and Washington Liaison

Brit Tzedek v'Shalom - The Jewish Alliance for Justice and Peace

1411 K Street, Suite 1350

Washington DC 20005

Ph: (202) 536-4092

Fax: (202) 536-5135

www.btvshalom.org

Appendix 5: Sample Advocacy Meeting Outline

I. Introductions

- Thank the Congressperson or staff member for meeting with you.
- Check in about how much time you have so that you can pace the meeting accordingly.
- Briefly introduce members of the delegation: name, town, congregational affiliation, profession, leadership role in the Jewish or secular community, relationship to Israel, Brit Tzedek leadership role, any personal connection to the Congress-member.
- Reference any previous meetings Brit Tzedek has had with the Congress-member, staffer, or their office.
- Give the member the Brit Tzedek folder and briefly explain contents.

II. Briefly describe Brit Tzedek Nationally, Locally, In District

Brit Tzedek is the largest Jewish grassroots peace organization in the country with a network of nearly 50,000 supporters organized into 40 chapters around the country, who are deeply committed to Israel's well-being through a negotiated two-state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

- In your district/state we have [XXX] supporters. Locally we have worked with [list other Jewish or prominent communities you have worked with].
- We have a nationwide rabbinic network with more than [XXX] Jewish clergy including XXX – number, names, synagogue affiliation – in your District/Statewide
- We are here as part of a national home district advocacy meeting initiative to let our Congress-members know that a substantial percentage of the Jewish community stands with us in wanting active U.S. engagement to bring about a two-state resolution.
- Describe most recent Rabbinic campaign/general campaign (information will be provided to you on this).

III. Thank Congress-member if signed onto recently endorsed Brit Tzedek legislation.

IV. Review “Current Talking Points” and Congress-member folder contents

V. Engage Congress-member/staff

1. (For first meetings) Where do you/Congress-member stand on these issues?
2. (For 2nd or consecutive meetings) What is the Congressperson's latest thinking on this issue?
3. (I applicable) How can Brit Tzedek best work with you to support our shared vision of two-states?

VI. Closing

- Ask about the best means to follow up and maintain future contact with the office, e.g. phone vs. email and specific contact name, email, etc.
- Offer chapter as a resource on Israel-related issues and legislation.
- Ask how we can help the Congress-member/staff become more knowledgeable and/or take a leadership role on this issue. (publishing letters to the editor, holding events, etc.).
- [If they are supportive of our cause]: Ask if interested in speaking at Brit Tzedek event in district.
- Thank them for the meeting.

Appendix 6: Sample Talking Points

Brit Tzedek v'Shalom Advocacy Talking Points

ASK: WE URGE CONGRESS

We urge Congress members to actively support the Administration's Mideast peacemaking efforts.

Brit Tzedek is supportive of the Obama administration's Middle East peace-related policies including the following:

- Israel enforce a total settlement freeze and end home demolitions in East Jerusalem;
- Israel end its total economic blockade on Gaza, which has created a humanitarian crisis while failing to undermine Hamas's rule in the territory.
- The Palestinian Authority make greater efforts to rein in militants, halt incitement against Israel, and continue to work with U.S. General Keith W. Dayton to improve security in the West Bank;
- The Palestinian Authority work towards good governance so that Israelis can feel confident that a peace deal will be sustainable;
- Arab states call on the leadership of Hamas to immediately end all rocket attacks on Israel and, at the same time, provide political and economic support for Abbas' reform and negotiation efforts.
- The Israeli and Palestinian political leadership resume negotiations toward a permanent two-state peace agreement.

Appendix 7: Background - Brit Tzedek's perspective on the present situation

General Overview

This is a unique and crucial time for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Since the first day of his administration, President Obama has made clear his commitment to the pursuit of a two-state resolution of the conflict as a vital U.S. strategic interest. Key components of his approach include the appointment of George Mitchell as Special Mideast Envoy, the outspoken leadership of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, personal meetings with Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas, and President Obama's historic speech in Cairo, where he laid out his vision for improved U.S. relations with the Muslim and Arab world and reiterated his commitment to Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking.

The Administration has made clear its expectation that both sides act in accordance with their obligations under the Road Map and Annapolis agreements. President Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, Secretary of State Clinton, as well as prominent pro-Israel members of Congress including Senator Kerry, Jewish members Senator Carl Levin and Representatives Howard Berman and Henry Waxman, have stood firmly behind administration policies as a key strategic U.S. interest.

We hope and expect that active U.S. engagement will lead to genuine progress towards peace. For President Obama's efforts to be successful, however, he will need the active support of the United States Congress.

Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations

- Effective US leadership requires President Obama to make clear his expectations that both sides will abide by all preexisting agreements and by any and all agreements that emerge from future negotiations.
- President Obama has articulated his desire for Palestinians to abandon violence and for the Palestinian authority to work towards developing its capacity to govern and serve its people. He has also called on the rest of the Arab states help the Palestinians develop its institutions and to recognize Israel.
- We welcome Prime Minister Netanyahu's recent endorsement of two states and agree that a future Palestinian state must not pose a military threat to Israel. Security guarantees and protocols must be an integral part of any final settlement. However, Prime Minister Netanyahu's statements on continued settlement expansion, the status of refugees, the indivisibility of Jerusalem, and the future Palestinian state's control over its own borders complicate efforts to renew substantive negotiations by prejudging their outcome.
- While we are pleased with the Netanyahu government's stated commitment to dismantle settlement outposts, we remain concerned that the Israeli government has refused to freeze all settlement activity. Settlement expansion undermines the peace process by seeking to predetermine borders and is contrary to the express policy of the U.S. as well as commitments made by Israel since the 1990's.
- We are pleased that the violence between Israel and Hamas has been curtailed, but remain concerned by the shaky ceasefire between the two parties, continuing firing of rockets from Gaza into southern Israel, and on-going restrictions on the flow of rebuilding and humanitarian supplies into Gaza. Such unresolved issues serve as dangerous ground for future conflagration.

- We have openly pledged to back President Obama in his committed and persistent leadership moving forward a negotiated two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict. We have pledged to work within our communities to build the political will that will enable decisive and bold steps. And we have pledged to make it known that an American President who dedicates her/himself to establishing a durable Israeli-Palestinian peace acts in the best interests of the United States, Israel, and the Palestinians.

Appendix 8: Questions frequently asked by members during advocacy meetings and answers

(only to be used if asked)

What is Brit Tzedek's position on Iran?

- The U.S. should pursue, with the international community, direct and unconditional diplomacy with Iran, along with economic incentives and sanctions, in order to persuade Iran to stop its pursuit of nuclear weapons capacity and agree to meaningful international oversight and inspection of its nuclear program.
- However, Brit Tzedek cautions against relying solely on sanctions as separate from a more comprehensive strategy that includes both incentives and disincentives.
- Brit Tzedek opposes launching a preemptive military attack on Iran, which would put Israeli citizens and Americans stationed in Iraq under severe threat of retaliation, result in heavy human casualties, fortify the position of Iranian hardliners, seriously derail any progress on Arab-Israeli peace talks, and plunge the Middle East into further chaos.

What is Brit Tzedek's position on Syria?

- Brit Tzedek strongly supports peace talks between Israel and Syria. A peace agreement would not only widen the circle of peace, it would likely lead to the isolation of Iran and its proxies – Hezbollah and Hamas – that reject peace with Israel.

What is Brit Tzedek's position on the natural growth of settlements?

- Natural growth refers to the concept that existing settlements should be allowed to accommodate the birth rate of existing settlers. It has been used to justify massive settlement expansion, in some cases exceeding what could possibly be “natural.”
- *Brit Tzedek rejects the “natural growth” argument. The New York Times* has reported that the settlers’ annual population growth, at 5.6 percent, far outstrips the Israeli average of 1.8 percent. Yet one-third of that growth stems from migration, according to Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics. *The New York Times* further reports that there is a disproportionately high level of state-supported building in the settlements compared with most regions of Israel. As Labor Party MK Ophir Pines recently said: “All of the talk about natural growth in the settlements is a bluff, and the Americans know that.”
- Brit Tzedek concurs with the Obama administration that settlement growth is problematic for the peace process, regardless of justification. It creates facts on the ground that prejudice negotiations on final borders for a Palestinian state. A complete settlement freeze was agreed to by Israel in the 2003 road map, and the Netanyahu government’s resistance to it is an effort stall the peace process. A total settlement freeze will create confidence, goodwill and other necessary conditions for the peace process to have success.

How can negotiations between Israel and the PA succeed if Hamas is in control of Gaza?

- Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas remains the elected President of the Palestinian Authority and Chairman of the PLO. In that role, he will continue to be the lead negotiator on behalf of the Palestinians.
- Both President Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad are widely regarded as pragmatists who are committed to a co-existence with Israel.

- It is also noteworthy that the West Bank has seen a marked improvement in security over the last year, thanks to the training led by General Dayton. Israeli support for the Arab Peace Initiative and removing roadblocks would serve to further marginalize the rejectionists.

Do you think Israel or the U.S. should negotiate with Hamas?

- Hamas refuses to recognize Israel's right to exist and thus does not welcome negotiations with the Jewish state.
- At the same time, however, Israel has been engaged in indirect negotiations with Hamas over the ceasefire in Gaza and the return of Cpl. Shalit. We support such indirect diplomacy to resolve on-the-ground issues between Israel and Hamas. Any formal negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians over a final status agreement will be President Abbas, in his role as Chairman of the PLO.
- President Abbas is the sole address for U.S.-Palestinian diplomatic relations for the U.S. Should a Palestinian unity government re-form between Hamas and Fatah, we urge the U.S. to pursue a policy of constructive engagement with that government and the government of Israel.

What is your position on dividing or sharing Jerusalem?

- Brit Tzedek supports sharing Jerusalem in the context of a final status agreement, with West Jerusalem as the Israeli capital and East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital, and access to the city's holy sites for all people.
- We believe that the Netanyahu government's call for an eternally "united and undivided Jerusalem" unfairly prejudices final status negotiations and does not recognize that Jerusalem is already divided along religious and ethnic lines - East Jerusalem is the cultural and economic center of the West Bank, and no Palestinian leadership could agree to a state that does not include East Jerusalem as its capital.

What is the difference between Brit Tzedek and AIPAC?

- AIPAC's primary mission is to generate U.S. support for the actions and policies of the Israeli government. Brit Tzedek's primary mission is to encourage U.S. policies that will successfully bring an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a negotiated two-state solution. We believe this is in the best interests of Israel and the United States.
- Brit Tzedek is changing the definition of what it means to be pro-Israel in Washington and the American Jewish community. We believe it is pro-Israel to be pro-peace.

What is the difference between Brit Tzedek and J Street?

- J Street is the political arm of the pro-Israel, pro-peace movement, the primary purpose of which is to raise money for political candidates who support Middle East peace and diplomacy.
- As a grassroots, non-profit organization, Brit Tzedek does not endorse or oppose political candidates for office. Our focus is on educating and mobilizing the American Jewish community at the grassroots level, to promote U.S. engagement in Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking.
- To date Brit Tzedek has worked collaboratively with J Street on pro-Israel/pro-peace legislative initiatives.
- The two entities will merge in 2010.

Appendix 9: Sample Follow Up report

c. Follow-up report for meeting with Sen. Schumer's Leg. Correspondent, Alex Levy, on Aug. 31, 2009 – New York Chapter

While I sent you a preliminary report of our local office meeting with Sen. Schumer's Leg. Correspondent, Alex Levy, on Aug. 31, I said that a full report would be forthcoming. Then came all the holidays, and I apologize for being this late in sending the report. By now you are deep into preparations for the J St Conference, but I need to do it so t is done!

The meeting was scheduled on the one day Alex Levy would be in NYC from Washington because of his response to my call challenging Schumer for signing onto the Bayh-Risch Letter , since it didn't include settlement construction freeze. It was later rescheduled to Aug. 31 to accommodate his schedule change and my teaching schedule (!) At the meeting, he commented on the fact that mine was the only call he received on Schumer's signing the Letter, saying that "Not even J St. called".

In attendance were Gerry Magnes from the Albany Chapter, Gil Kulick representing National Board and Kucinich and Rangel's Districts ,David Schiller and I as Advocacy Co-Chairs for NYC and all of us constituents.

At the meeting, we discussed the Letter and BTvS concerns with it not including Pres. Obama's specific concerns expressed around settlements since our effort were primarily at that time on the "Back Pres. Obama" Campaign and the need to support the president. Our campaign already had 1000 signatures and showed evidence of broadly based grassroots support. Gil particularly discussed with Levy the particular concerns about the East Jerusalem settlements which could negate negotiations. Levy said that the US can't impose a solution, and we restated the importance of the US to bring both parties to the table, agreeing that a regional support for a permanent solution is needed.

We emphasized that BT, only 6 years old, is already a major presence in the US, over 45,000 member/supporters, with chapters in NYS in Albany, Kingston, Westchester, Ithaca, Rochester, and with approximately 2,000 in NYC and 4,000 in NYS. The grassroots aspect was discussed, with Levy saying that BT should be the grassroots base for J St. He was interested in the J St. Conference dates and suggested making appointments in DC. (I gave you that information earlier.)

We listened and joined in a conversation which extended from 45 minutes to an hour, clearly on a crowded calendar. The listening and conversational mode, originally suggested by Aliza, was very effective, and established a tone of mutually coming to grips with the problems and looking for possible solutions/explanations. We did that in the other local meetings in Aug./Sept. and found the approach very successful. We recommend it. It gave all of us an opportunity to have an interchange on the topics and ideas expressed. The Talking Points were discussed, and a copy was sent soon after the meeting.

Levy summarized Schumer's views of being in favor of a 2 state solution arrived at in negotiations, and that the Palestinian State would need to be demilitarized. The place we did not have in agreement was the concern for settlement freeze. We suggested that BT be considered as a resource for the future in the event other Letters and Bills come up, and Levy thought that could be done.

Thanks for your patience. This report was contributed to by all of the names listed below.

Gil Kulick, Gerry Magnes, David Schiller, and Shirley Rausher

