

Urge Speaker Boehner to Postpone Netanyahu Invitation until After the Israeli Election and Iran Sanctions Deadline

Dear Colleague:

Last week Speaker Boehner invited Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu to address a joint session of Congress in March. Israel is a valued ally and Israeli Prime Ministers have a long history of addressing Congress, but this invitation is harmful for three reasons: it undermines the president's foreign policy; it puts a close ally in the middle of a domestic political debate, and it elevates a candidate in a foreign election.

We will gladly welcome the leader of Israel after the deadline for Iran negotiations has passed and after Israelis have cast their ballots.

We hope to have your support on the letter below.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Lindsey Herbel at Lindsey.Herbel@mail.house.gov or at x5.4755 in Mr. Ellison's office.

Sincerely,

Keith Ellison
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

February XX, 2015

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of House of Representatives
H-232 Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

We write to urge you to postpone your invitation to Prime Minister Netanyahu to address a joint session of Congress in March. Israel is a valued ally and Israeli Prime Ministers have a long history of addressing Congress. We very much appreciate that Prime Minister Netanyahu has twice had the honor of speaking before a joint session. However, at this time your invitation is contrary to the standards by which our Congress operates and has the potential to harm U.S. Foreign policy .

The timing of this invitation and lack of coordination with the White House indicate that this is not an ordinary diplomatic visit. Rather this appears to be an attempt to promote new sanctions legislation against Iran that could undermine critical negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran. At the State of the Union President Obama made it clear that he will veto new Iran sanctions legislation. The invitation to Prime Minister Netanyahu enlists a foreign leader to influence a Presidential policy initiative. We should be able to disagree on foreign policy within our American political system and without undermining the Presidency. Aside from being improper, this places Israel, a close and valued ally, in the middle of a policy debate between Congress and the White House. As members of Congress who support Israel, we share concern that it appears that you are using a foreign leader as a political tool against the president. We should not turn our diplomatic friendship into a partisan issue. Beyond threatening our diplomatic priorities, the timing of this invitation offers the Congressional platform to elevate a candidate in a foreign election.

A visit from Israel's Prime Minister would normally be an occasion for bipartisan cooperation and support. Our relationship with Israel is too important to use as a pawn in political gamesmanship. We strongly urge you to postpone this invitation until Israelis have cast their ballots and our consideration of the current round of Iran-related legislation has concluded. When the Israeli Prime Minister visits us outside the specter of partisan politics, we will be delighted and honored to greet him or her on the Floor of the House.

Sincerely,