

Letter

## A LETTER TO AIPAC

By [Betty McCollum](#)

*The letter below was sent by Representative Betty McCollum, a Democrat from Minnesota, to the executive director of AIPAC. The bill mentioned, H.R. 4681, the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act of 2006, would place so many restraints on aid to the Palestinian people, and so many restrictions on the administration's ability to deal with the Palestinians, that even the State Department has opposed it. AIPAC has strongly backed it. The Senate version of the bill, S. 2237, would allow the administration far more flexibility. On April 6, the House International Relations Committee passed H.R. 4681 by a vote of 36 to 2; McCollum was one of the two nays. As of May 11, AIPAC has yet to respond to her demand for an apology.*

—Michael Massing

April 10, 2006

Mr. Howard Kohr  
Executive Director  
American Israel Public Affairs Committee  
440 First Street, NW; Suite 600  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Kohr:

During my nineteen years serving in elected office, including the past five years as a Member of Congress, never has my name and reputation been maligned or smeared as it was last week by a representative of AIPAC. Last Friday, during a call with my chief of staff, an AIPAC representative from Minnesota who has frequently lobbied me on behalf of your organization stated, "on behalf of herself, the Jewish community, AIPAC, and the voters of the Fourth District, Congresswoman McCollum's *support for terrorists* will not be tolerated." Ironically, this individual, who does not even live in my congressional district, feels free to speak for my constituents.

This response may have been the result of extreme emotion or irrational passion, but regardless, it is a hateful attack that is vile and offensive to me and the families I represent. I call on AIPAC to immediately condemn this un-American attack and disavow any attempt to use this type of threat and intimidation to stifle legitimate policy differences. I will not stand to be labeled or threatened in a manner that questions my patriotism or my oath of office.

Last week, I did vote against *H.R. 4681* during mark-up of the bill in the House International Relations Committee. As a Member of Congress sworn to uphold the Constitution, and ensure the security of the US and represent the values and beliefs of the constituents who I serve, it was my view that *H.R. 4681* goes beyond the State Department's current policies toward Hamas and the Palestinian Authority and potentially undermines the US position vis-à-vis the coordinated international pressure on Hamas. The language contained in *S. 2237* accurately reflects my position.

Keeping diplomatic pressure on Hamas to renounce terrorism, recognize the State of Israel, dismantle terrorist infrastructure, and honor past agreements and treaty obligations, while preventing a humanitarian crisis among the Palestinian people, are all policy goals already strongly supported by myself, the Bush administration, Congress and the American people. But, if the purpose of *H.R. 4681* was to send another strong message to Hamas and the Palestinian people, as Congress already has sent with the passage of *S. Con. Res. 79*, then I disagree with the vehicle for that message. In my opinion, Congress should be articulating clear support for the Secretary of State's present course of action; not creating a new law which likely diminishes the diplomatic tools needed to advance US policy goals with regard to the Palestinian people, potentially cuts US funding to the United Nations, and largely restates current law while creating on-going and burdensome unfunded reporting requirements.

As you well know, in Congress we do not shy away from condemning the vile words of despots and dictators who use anti-Semitism as a weapon to incite hatred, fear and violence. AIPAC should not have a lower standard for persons affiliated and representing its organization when they label a

Member of Congress who thinks for herself and always puts the interest of our nation and people first a supporter of terrorists.

You and your colleagues at AIPAC have the right to disagree with my position on any piece of legislation, but for an AIPAC representative to say that I would ever vote to support Middle East terrorists over the interests of my country will never be tolerated by me or the families I serve. This incident rises to a level in which a formal, written apology is required.

Mr. Kohr, I am a supporter of a strong US–Israeli relationship and my voting record speaks for itself. This will not change. But until I receive a formal, written apology from your organization I must inform you that AIPAC representatives are not welcome in my offices or for meetings with my staff.

Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress  
4th District, Minnesota  
Washington, D.C.

---