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**Congress' Dirty
[Seven] Dozen on
Aipac
All-Expense-Paid
Israel Junket**

August 14, 2011 - 81 members of Congress are now in Israel on an all-expense paid junket sponsored by Aipac's nominally non-profit American-Israel Education Foundation. The value of the trip for the member and

Congress' Dirty [Seven] Dozen on Aipac All-Expense-Paid Israel Junket Richard Silverstein

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Democratic Congressional porkers at Aipac's trough meeting Pres. Peres

August 14, 2011

Pork may be *treif*, but not when it's dished out by the pro-Israel lobby.

81 members of Congress are now in Israel on an all-expense paid junket sponsored by Aipac's nominally non-profit American-Israel Education Foundation. The value of the trip for the member and spouse is \$8,000, meaning Aipac is forking over nearly **\$700,000** to fund this massive hasbara undertaking.

In the interest of transparency and knowing where our tax dollars are spent, I thought it would be important to list every name of every junketeer so their constituents can know that their member is on the pro-Israel gravy train. Here are the 33 I've discovered so far (please add more in the thread below):

Mo Brooks R-5 AL
Eric Cantor R-7 VA
Russ Carnahan D-3 MO
Steve Chabot R-1 OH (went last month)
David Cicilline D-1 RI
Yvette Clarke D-11 NY
Mark Critz D- 12 PA
Scott DesJarlais R- 4 TN
Chuck Fleischman R-3 TN
John Garamendi D-10 CA
Kay Granger R-12 TX
Michael Grimm NY-13
Janice Hahn D-36 CA
Jaime Herrera Buetler R-3 WA
Mazie Hirono D- 2 HI
Steny Hoyer D-5 MD
Jesse Jackson Jr. D-2 IL
Patrick Meehan D-7 PA
Kevin McCarthy CA-22
Gwen Moore D-4 WI
Bill Owens D-23 NY
Steven Palazzo R-4 MS
Ed Perlmutter D-7 CO

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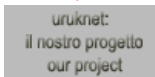
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Tom Price R-6 GA
Peter Roskam R-6 IL
Loretta Sanchez D-47 CA
David Schweikert R-5 AZ
Adam Smith D-9 WA
Steve Southerland R-2 FLA
Betty Sutton D-13 OH
Scott Tipton R-3 CO
Allen West R-22 FL
Frederica Wilson D-17 FL
Kevin Yoder R-3 KS
Kathy Castor D-11 FL
Terri Sewell D-7 AL (not confirmed)
Hank Johnson D-4 GA

A terrific website, Legistorm, tracks such junkets and offers a listing of all Congress members and staffers who've [gone to AIEF's trough](#) for Israel trips. It also lays out the specific costs of each trip. AIEF's \$26 million annual budget gives you a good idea how much is spent each year on this lobbying boondoggle.

What I find ironic is that Congress has just spent weeks dodging one of the worst economic bullets to hit the U.S. since the 2008 financial meltdown. And it did a piss poor job of dealing with it. So now that they failed so miserably at doing their jobs here in Washington, they're going to reward themselves with some much-needed sun, fun and hasbara on Tel Aviv beaches and in Israeli government conference rooms. In their briefings, which are ostensibly "fair and balanced," here's who they won't be meeting: leaders of the J14 protest movement which is sweeping the Israeli street; Hamas, which represents approximately one-half of the Palestinian electorate; or Israeli Palestinian community leaders (or MKs).

Astonishing, that these wise and learned solons are traveling all the way to Israel to learn about the nation's needs and how they can help keep Israel strong. Yet they won't have a single meeting with J14 activists. Not to mention that the \$8,000 spent on their behalf should be an embarrassment both to their constituents and those Israelis who are so desperate to maintain their middle-class status in the face of Israel's continuing budgetary squeeze, that they've turned to the tent protest movement to express their increasing desperation. But guess who isn't likely to hear much of anything about all this? Steny and Eric and all his good buddies.

Finally, there is the [ethical and legal dimension of the junket](#) that is deeply disturbing. Congress members are not allowed to take such trips if sponsored by groups which employ registered lobbyists, which Aipac does. So to get around the law, Aipac established AIEF as a 501c3 which has no lobbyists on its payroll. In fact, AIEF has NO employees on its payroll according to its IRS 990 report. Aipac "lends" AIEF its staff to organize these grand tours of the Israeli heartland. Because members *may* accept trips from non-profits, they can do a legal end around ethics laws by lining up at the AIEF trough for a generous feeding.

So what does \$700,000 buy for a lobbying group these days? It buys tons of meaningless 'sense of Congress' resolutions that buttress every wild-eyed pet project and policy Aipac is peddling. These resolutions prove nothing to anyone except that they give Aipac's donors a sense of their own power in wielding clubs over their captive Congressional audience. I suppose for the group these junkets are an insurance policy in case Bibi and his far right government ever really need Congress' help in swatting away a real threat to Likud hegemony—like a UN vote for Palestinian statehood or a concerted international BDS campaign which gained traction and posed a significant financial threat to Israel. Then Aipac could pull out all the stops to obstruct Obama (if he ever dared to do such a thing) from crossing Israel in a truly serious way.

If there was ever a thing that the Israeli-Arab conflict does NOT need it's 80 members of Congress braying their ignorance and eternal fealty to Aipac at every turn whether during a junket or back in the halls of Congress. Instead, they'd be far better off staying home and studying ways to raise revenue and reduce a bloated military budget in order to rein in the nation's deficit.

[Source](#)

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:: [Letter from President Saddam Hussein to the American People](#)

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