

To: Interested Parties

From: GBA Strategies

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J Street National Survey of Jewish Voters *Summary Findings*

As the United States and the P5+1 approach the June 30 deadline in the negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program, a new national survey shows that support for an agreement runs very high among American Jews.¹ Iran is not a high priority for Jews, but they are following the issue and a large majority supports a final agreement that eases economic sanctions in exchange for greater international inspection of Iran's nuclear facilities and restrictions on its nuclear program. With 59 percent of Jews supporting the agreement, Jewish support exceeds support among the general U.S. population when asked the same question as a recent CNN poll which showed 53 percent support among all Americans.

Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech to the U.S. Congress – at the invitation of Speaker John Boehner, who did not consult with the White House prior to the invitation – injected a great deal of partisanship into the Iran debate, and this partisanship undermines Netanyahu and others who seek to rally American Jews to oppose an agreement with Iran. Jews express extraordinarily negative opinions toward the Republican party (20 percent favorable/68 percent unfavorable) and leading Republican figures, including Speaker John Boehner (9 percent favorable/62 percent unfavorable) and Jeb Bush (13 percent favorable/64 percent unfavorable). And while President Obama has a 56 percent job approval, Congressional job approval lags far behind at 21 percent.

The negotiations with Iran are undoubtedly complex, and evoke conflicting feelings for American Jews who see the Israeli Prime Minister attacking a Democratic President whom they support. In fact, Jews do hold warm feelings toward Prime Minister Netanyahu (47 percent favorable/20 percent unfavorable), but they do not like the anti-Obama rhetoric that has permeated public debate and 57 percent think it is not accurate to claim Obama doesn't support Israel.

President Obama has often said that he has Israel's back, and it is clear that American Jews have his back if he reaches an agreement with Iran.

¹ GBA Strategies conducted a national survey of American Jews for J Street May 31-June 3, 2015. The survey consisted of 1,000 American Jewish adults, and the survey methodology is detailed at the end of this memo. Topline results and crosstabs can be accessed at jstreet.org.

Key Findings

- **Iran is not a high priority issue, but most Jews have been following the negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program.** Only 6 percent of American Jews cite Iran as one of the top 2 issues that the President and Congress should prioritize. Despite the low priority that they assign to Iran, two-thirds of Jews report that they have heard a great deal (22 percent) or some (45 percent) information about the agreement the U.S. and P5+1 reached with Iran.
- **American Jews express strong support for a final agreement with Iran that increases inspections in exchange for economic sanctions relief, and Jewish support is higher than support among the general U.S. population.** When presented with the following description of an agreement with Iran, 59 percent of American Jews say they would support it, compared to 53 percent of American adults in an April CNN poll that asked the same question:

“As you may know, the U.S. and other countries have imposed strict economic sanctions against Iran while that country has nuclear facilities which could eventually allow it to produce its own nuclear weapons. Do you favor or oppose an agreement that would ease some of those economic sanctions and in exchange require Iran to accept major restrictions on its nuclear program but not end it completely and submit to greater international inspection of its nuclear facilities?”

- **When provided more details about a final agreement, Jewish support grows further.** A striking 78 percent support the agreement that has been reported by negotiators and “imposes intrusive inspections... caps the level at which Iran can enrich uranium to far below what is necessary to make a nuclear weapon...in exchange for phased relief from U.S. and international sanctions as Iran complies with the terms of the agreement.”
- **The Iran debate takes place in a highly partisan environment, and Jewish support for Democrats continues to far outpace support for Republicans.** The Democratic Party is seen favorably by a plurality of Jews (46 favorable/39 unfavorable), while the Republican Party is heavily disliked (20 favorable/68 unfavorable). Attitudes toward individual Republicans are even worse, including Jeb Bush (13 favorable/64 unfavorable) and John Boehner (9 favorable/62 unfavorable).
- **Despite ongoing attacks on President Obama’s “pro-Israel credentials,” Jews continue to believe he is doing a good job and that it is inaccurate to portray the President as insufficiently supportive of Israel.** Obama’s 56 percent job approval among Jews is 11 points higher than his approval among the general U.S. population (according to the RealClearPolitics presidential approval average of 9 national polls, reported on June 3, 2015, when the J Street survey finished).

When asked to choose between a statement about whether Obama has gone too far in his criticism of Netanyahu and does not sufficiently support Israel OR whether Obama's criticism of Netanyahu policies is appropriate and it is inaccurate to claim Obama doesn't support Israelis, 57 percent of Jews believe the criticism of Obama is inaccurate.

- **Support for a 2-state solution and the U.S. playing an active role to help resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict remains solid.** American Jews continue to strongly support a 2-state solution (ranging from 65 to 72 percent support, depending on the criteria), and an overwhelming majority (84 percent) support America playing an active role to help the parties resolve the conflict. As we have seen in previous research, Jews support the U.S. publicly disagreeing or exerting pressure on both Israelis and Arabs to make compromises to achieve peace. But Jews do not support the U.S. singling out Israel when publicly disagreeing or exerting pressure.
- **Looking ahead to 2016, Hillary Clinton is well-positioned to continue Democrats' strong majority among Jewish voters in Presidential elections.** In a head-to-head match-up with Jeb Bush, Clinton wins 64-26. After allocating the undecided voters based on candidate favorability and party identification among the undecided voters, Clinton leads 68-30.

Methodological Note

GBA Strategies designed the questionnaire for this national survey of American Jewish adults. The survey was conducted May 31-June 3, 2015 and includes 1,000 self-identified Jews. The survey is subject to a margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. GBA Strategies contracted the research company Mountain West Research Center to administer the survey by email invitation to its web-based panel, which is regularly updated and consists of nearly 900,000 Americans.

Respondents were screened at the beginning of the survey when they were first asked for their religion and then, if they did not identify themselves as Jewish by religion, they were asked again if they considered themselves Jewish.

The survey results, including full question wording and crosstabs are available at jstreet.org.