

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honor of Israel's 60th anniversary.

Before I joined Congress, I had the privilege of visiting Israel. It was a trip that I will never forget. I will always remember my visits to Yad Vashem and Masada. I even have a picture of Masada hanging in my office to remind me of this life-changing trip.

I have always considered myself a friend of Israel, but that trip made me realize that our two countries are more than just friends, we are relatives. Both the United States and Israel had to fight bloody wars of independence to establish peaceful democracies. Both countries know that to maintain such democracies requires eternal vigilance.

That visit left me with a big impression and provided me with what I think is a unique understanding of how the security of our two nations is interdependent. This experience helped me understand that I have a responsibility to do what I can in Congress to strengthen the relationship between the United States and Israel. One of the ways we must do this is by standing firm to stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

I was proud to cosponsor H.R. 1400, the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act. And in the age of growing threats to Israel's security, I was proud to stand up and support a foreign aid package that helped Israel defend itself and our own security interests in the Middle East.

I look forward to continuing to work to ensure that the U.S.-Israel relationship grows stronger during this difficult time in the Middle East and around the globe.