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JStreetPAC Distributes Nearly \$570,000 to 41 Endorsed Candidates in 2008

Largest pro-Israel PAC in its first year

In full-page New York Times ad today, J Street's lobby pledges support to Obama for active diplomacy in the Middle East

WASHINGTON — JStreetPAC announced today that at least 31 candidates it endorsed for House and Senate were elected Tuesday including Jeff Merkley, the new Senator from Oregon.

Six JStreetPAC candidates are newly-elected members of the House and all 24 of the incumbent Members of Congress it endorsed are returning. Three candidates endorsed by the PAC are in races that remain too close to call.

In just six months since its launch, JStreetPAC raised and distributed nearly \$570,000 for its candidates, making it the largest of several dozen pro-Israel PACs in the country.

JStreetPAC's candidates are all committed to a strong U.S.-Israel relationship, to active American leadership to achieve comprehensive peace in the Middle East, and to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The PAC also supports diplomacy with Iran and a responsible but rapid end to the war in Iraq.

Through the October 14, 2008 filing period, no other pro-Israel PAC had distributed more than \$300,000 in the 2008 cycle to its endorsed candidates. Similarly in the 2004 and 2006 election cycles, the largest pro-Israel PACs distributed slightly less than \$300,000. JStreetPAC's total through Election Day nearly doubled those figures.

“The success of JStreetPAC's fundraising and of its candidates sends a clear message to the American political system: American Jews and other friends of Israel will provide serious political and financial support to candidates who define themselves as ‘pro-Israel’ through their commitment to diplomacy and to security through peace,” said JStreetPAC's Executive Director, Jeremy Ben-Ami.

“J Street's efforts have tapped into a real hunger shared by tens of thousands of American Jews and other friends of Israel for a political voice that represents *their* aspirations for Israel's long-term peace and security.”

In addition to conventional fundraising methods, JStreetPAC borrowed a page from successful netroots efforts in cultivating a large online list of Americans willing to make small contributions and take action to demonstrate the breadth of support for the PAC's agenda. The PAC had over 2,000 donors, many of them giving \$10 or \$20 to candidates.

Altogether, JStreetPAC endorsed 38 House and three Senate candidates. The complete list of endorsements can be found at <http://donate.jstreetpac.org/page/pac>. Also among the bi-partisan group endorsed by JStreetPAC are four committee chairs, leading members of the House's Jewish, Black and Hispanic caucuses, decorated officers in the armed services, a former Sinai peacekeeper and the first Muslim American elected to Congress.

"The large number and high caliber of the endorsees speaks to the growing recognition on Capitol Hill that the single most pro-Israel thing any American politician can stand for is active U.S. help in bringing about a two-state solution and a comprehensive peace agreement between Israel and her neighbors," said Ben-Ami. "Eight years of malignant neglect of diplomacy by the Bush Administration is finally seen to have hurt Israel, and there is now real political support for a change of direction under a new administration."

In its most closely watched races, JStreetPAC-endorsed challengers – such as Merkley, Gary Peters in Michigan, Darcy Burner in Washington and Tom Periello in Virginia – took on incumbents with well-established reputations for supporting the foreign policy of George W. Bush and hawkish positions on Israel.

The PAC's sister organization, J Street, worked during the campaign to mobilize American Jews to reject attempts to pander to the community's hawkish minority. In a full-page ad in today's *New York Times*, the group claimed victory for hope over fear – citing exit polls showing that Barack Obama won a larger percentage of the Jewish vote, 78%, than John Kerry. (See the ad here: http://action.jstreet.org/t/3251/content.jsp?content_KEY=2402.)

During the campaign, J Street called to account Jewish newspapers which ran libelous, swift boat-style advertisements by the Republican Jewish Coalition. It helped lead a successful effort to convince the Conference of President of Major Jewish Organizations to retract an invitation to have Sarah Palin speak at a unity rally on Iran. It also pressed Senator Joe Lieberman with over 40,000 petitions not to speak at a conference organized by the Christian Zionist preacher John Hagee.

In the six months since its inception, the J Street organizations have built a netroots movement of more than 86,000 Americans and amassed more than \$1.9 million in combined political and operational contributions.

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