

Israel, and encouraging our two countries to strengthen bilateral relations, Congress is clearly stating its confidence in the future of this great country. Israelis and Americans share mutual democratic values, and respect, and our countries are stronger when we work together. As citizens of both nations face similar enemies in the Global War on Terrorism, we must remain committed to a strong friendship which will protect both of our countries.

As the people of Israel celebrate their 58th year of independence, I am honored to extend my warmest congratulations on this inspiring achievement.

In conclusion, God bless our troops and we will never forget September 11th.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, Israel is one of the United States' greatest allies and I am proud to join my colleagues in recognizing it on the occasion of its 58th anniversary celebration of independence.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the U.S.-Israeli relationship is its mutual benefits. For 58 years the United States has assisted Israel diplomatically, financially and militarily, while Israel has proved itself to be a stalwart friend of democracy in a volatile region of the world. Particularly since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Israel has not hesitated to provide technical assistance, intelligence and advice on matters of homeland security, on which it has become, out of necessity, an expert in its own right.

Although the history of the Land of Israel stretches back far longer than that of the United States, we share a common history as refuges to victims of persecution, and as nations that never balked to defend freedom, democracy and the inalienable rights of man.

The United States is proud of its alliance with Israel—a friendship that officially began 11 minutes after Israel's creation. I look forward to many great years of thoughtful exchange and the promotion of our common interests of world peace and prosperity. Congratulations to the people of Israel as they celebrate the 58th anniversary of their statehood.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Con. Res. 392, which celebrates the 58th anniversary of the independence of the State of Israel. Today, we remember and pay tribute to the creation of the democratic State of Israel. It took the United States only eleven minutes after Israel had been declared a state to officially welcome her into the community of nations. For the last 58 years the United States and Israel have built a unique special relationship.

The creation of the State of Israel was a bold step in May of 1948. The first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, once said that, "courage is a special kind of knowledge: the knowledge of how to fear what ought to be feared and how not to fear what ought not to be feared." It is from such courage that the State of Israel was formed and from which Israel continues to maintain its vibrant and strong democracy today. We can all learn examples from the struggles that the citizens have endured and the grief they have overcome to remain a democratic outpost in the Middle East.

I am proud to join my colleagues today to reiterate our continued strong support of Israel and her right to defend herself and her people from terrorism, and to focus on the special relationship that exists between our two nations. I have had the pleasure of traveling to Israel

on a number of occasions, and these visits have only reinforced my strong conviction that the United States must remain actively engaged in ensuring a peaceful and equitable agreement between the two parties to the current conflict.

Yet, much work remains unfinished. We are all troubled by the recent Palestinian elections that put Hamsa in control of the Palestinian Authority and by the hateful, threatening comments that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has made about Israel. This year also brought a transition from Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to Ehud Olmert, and my thoughts and prayers remain with the Sharon family. This has been a unique year for Israel, full of challenges that were admirably met. As Ben-Gurion used to say, "in Israel, in order to be a realist you must believe in miracles." I still strongly believe in the dream that has become the wonderful reality of Israel.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support this resolution celebrating the 58 years of Israel's existence as a beacon of democracy and hope in the Middle East. I also celebrate today the daily courage exhibited by the citizens of Israel and express my personal commitment to Israel at this milestone in its history. I look forward to future anniversaries, and to the day when Israel and her citizens can live in peace without the need for courage against fear.

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, today I wish to join in celebrating the anniversary of Israel's independence. Israel is one of America's closest allies. We rely on her good will in our War on Terror. We enjoy mutually beneficial economic agreements. And, we value Israel as the only functioning democracy in the world's most volatile region.

On May 14, 1948, or the fifth day of the month of Iyar, which is the Hebrew date of the formal establishment of the State, members of the "provisional government" read and signed a Declaration of Independence in Tel Aviv. After decades of no homeland, the State of Israel was finally returned to the Jewish people. This year will mark the 58th anniversary of "Yom Ha'atzmaut" or Independence Day.

Yom Ha'atzmaut in Israel is always preceded by Yom Hazikaron—Memorial Day for the Fallen Soldiers. The message of linking these two days is clear: Israelis owe their independence—the very existence of the State—to the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for it, a sentiment not lost on Americans.

The official transition from Yom Hazikaron to Yom Ha'atzmaut is a moving event that takes place a few minutes after sundown with a ceremony on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem in which the flag is raised from half staff to the top of the pole. The President of Israel delivers a speech of congratulations, and soldiers representing the army, navy, and air force parade with their flags.

I wish our good companion, Israel, safety and security, prosperity and good fortune over the upcoming year. I vow to continue standing with you and working to ensure that the friendship between our two great nations remains strong.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and celebrate the 58th birthday of the State of Israel. Israel is an important ally of the United States and like our great country, Israel was founded by people seeking freedom from religious persecution. This persecution came in the form of the Holocaust—one of the most heinous events in recent history.

The United States recognized Israel within 11 minutes of its creation as an independent nation; however, not all developments in Israel's infancy as a nation were welcome. Attacked in 1948 from all sides by surrounding Arab nations, Israel defeated its enemies but soon learned it would have to develop as a democratic nation while vigilantly patrolling its borders for foreign invaders.

In addition to being a picturesque country located on the Mediterranean Sea, Israel is home to many religious sites that are sacred to people of the Muslim, Christian and Jewish faith. This concentration of Holy sites makes it all the more unfortunate that Israel and its people are the targets of so many terrorist attacks.

Mr. Speaker, Israel and the United States have strong bilateral relations that I hope will continue to grow and strengthen in the years to come. I wish the people and the leaders of Israel best wishes, continued prosperity and a peaceful future.

Mr. CANTOR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of this resolution congratulating Israel on the occasion of its 58 years of independence.

On May 14, 1948, facing overwhelming odds and almost assured destruction by its Arab neighbors, Jews living in their ancestral homeland, survivors of the Holocaust and Jewish refugees from around the world gathered in a small room in Tel Aviv to announce the creation of the Jewish state of Israel. In the shadow of the murderous genocide of the Holocaust, the state of Israel was created so that Jews around the world would always have safe refuge from oppression and annihilation.

In 1948, years of Zionists' dreams culminated as David Ben Gurion announced to the world that once again Israel was to be a free and independent state, founded on principles of freedom and democracy, the new state of Israel was quickly recognized by the United States as a welcome ally in the Middle East. Unfortunately, within hours of this historic declaration, the neighboring Arab nations attacked and sent Israel into its first war as an independent nation. Despite conventional wisdom, and the great surprise of many around the world, Israel survived the attack but at a heavy cost to the young nation.

Today, 58 years after the creation of the state, Israel still struggles with an enemy who wishes to destroy it. In addition, just last January, the Palestinian people freely elected Hamas, a terrorist organization that strives for the destruction of the state of Israel, to run its government. Israel is a thriving democracy and one of the United States' strongest allies in the global war on terror. Israel has demonstrated to the world that democracy can thrive in the Middle East and that freedom of religion, freedom of the press and basic human rights can work in a region that is otherwise dominated by terror and oppression.

I stand today to congratulate Israel on its strong dedication to freedom and democracy throughout its 58 years of existence. I look forward to strengthening the U.S.-Israel relationship and continuing to celebrate Israel's independence in years to come.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of our time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by