

- [Archives](#)
- [RSS](#)

Close

Share

-  [del.icio.us](#)
-  [Digg](#)
-  [Facebook](#)
-  [NewsVine](#)
-  [Reddit](#)
-  [StumbleUpon](#)

Political Points—But what if you believe in AIPAC *and* climate change?

By [Ron Kampeas](#) · October 26, 2010

Welcome to Political Points, where we're rejecting job applications, whatever your beliefs, until next Tuesday and beyond.

The House Republican Study Committee, the conservative GOP caucus headed by **Rep. Mike Pence (R-Ind.), is seeking staffers and wants to know what they believe, [Roll Call reports](#). The Heritage Foundation is processing the queries. There's an interesting wrinkle when it comes to assessing beliefs:

The questionnaire on the Heritage Foundation website asks applicants questions about their views on foreign, economic and social policy.

Applicants are then asked to “rate” their level of agreement with individuals and organizations on the survey.

Individuals and organizations listed include former vice president **Al Gore**, Sen. **Dianne Feinstein** (D-Calif.), the Cato Institute, President **George W. Bush** and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

FactCheck [checks out](#) the [Republican Jewish Coalition](#) ad targeting Rep. **Joe Sestak (D-Pa.), running for his state's open U.S. Senate seat, and finds it wanting:

An announcer comes on to say that Sestak "wanted **Khalid Sheikh Mohammed** tried in a Pennsylvania courthouse rather than in a military court." It goes on to say, "Tell Joe Sestak we shouldn't be trying terrorists in our backyard."

It's true that Mohammed's case, if tried in a federal court, would follow constitutionally guaranteed trial process rules. Included in that process, under the Sixth Amendment, is the trial location. In Mohammed's case, that would mean holding his trial in one of the districts where the crime was committed: Manhattan, Northern Virginia or Western Pennsylvania.

Sestak has publicly supported trying Mohammed in a civilian court, but to say he "wanted" the trial in Pennsylvania is a stretch.

FactCheck then quotes at greater length the [Wall Street Journal blog post](#) cited by the RJC:

Sestak was in the Pentagon when terrorists slammed an airliner into the building. His first choice is to try the alleged plotters in Northern Virginia. Manhattan is his second choice. A trial just blocks from the former site of the Twin Towers “would show the strength of the American judicial system,” he said.

But he would be happy to bring them to Pennsylvania as well. “I would accept them anywhere in America, to be brought here, to be brought to justice, to have the keys thrown away or to have them given the death sentence by a jury of our peers,” he said.

Concludes Fact Check:

Pennsylvania is Sestak’s third choice. That’s not the same as saying he wants terror trials in Pennsylvania.

FactCheck takes it a parse too far, I think -- the RJC could be forgiven for the slight conflation. The WSJ blog post hed, after all, reads: Sestak Suggests Pa. Trial for 9/11 Plotters

J Street, like Rep. [Nita Lowey](#) (D-N.Y.), [thinks the proposal](#) by Rep. **Eric Cantor (R-Va.) to pull funding for Israel out of the foreign aid package is a Bad Idea:

J Street unconditionally supports and lobbies for robust U.S. assistance to Israel, and will continue to support such aid no matter what the legislative vehicle.

At the same time, J Street opposes separating aid to Israel from the foreign assistance appropriations to other countries for the sake of accommodating right-wing politicians who are ideologically opposed to foreign aid. U.S. assistance to Israel can only maximize our ally’s security when provided in concert with economic and military aid to other countries that enhances stability by fighting poverty and extremism in the region and beyond.

Additionally, the foreign operations bill provides funding of U.S. diplomacy led by the State Department, including the Middle East peace efforts necessary to Israel’s future and to regional stability.

****Lenny Ben David**, in the Jerusalem Post, [runs through](#) J Street's political action committee donors and is shocked, shocked to find that many of the "suspect" names he uncovered last year are donating this year.

Maybe these names are suspect -- although I see at least one prominent member of the DC Jewish community among them. Maybe they are not "pro-Israel," per Lenny's designation. But I'm not sure I see why it's shocking that J Street would accept their money this year, when they made it clear last year that they were happy to keep the money.

****Steve Sheffey**, a Chicago area Democratic activist, emails me and wants to know why more isn't made of the vote Rep. **Mark Kirk** (R-Ill.), running for the state's open U.S. Senate seat, cast for **Rep. Darrell Issa** (R-Calif.) when Issa ran for chairman of the Republican Policy Committee in 2006. Issa lost to Rep. **Thaddeus McCotter** (R-Mich.)

Issa has said Israel practices apartheid, and has a decidedly revisionist view of what Israel offered **Yasser Arafat** in 200-2001, laid out [in this account](#) of his address to the Orange County Arab American Republican Club in 2001. And, as Steve says, Kirk's vote was not a matter of party loyalty -- this was Republican v. Republican.

Steve writes:

Kirk was one of about 60 Republicans who saw nothing wrong with elevating a man who accused Israel of apartheid to leadership. Kirk has never explained why he voted for Issa. Imagine the outrage--the justifiable outrage--we'd hear if Obama appointed someone who had previously accused Israel of apartheid. Doesn't Kirk owe us an explanation if he expects our vote? Kirk's supporters all too often accuse the opposition of guilt by distant association, and yet here is an example of Kirk directly supporting someone whose views on Israel are antithetical to both ours and, presumably, Kirk's.

I see Steve's anger at the double standard, but I wonder if Steve and Lenny alike are, in a heated political season, boiling down complex views to make a point: Lenny acknowledges in his piece, for instance, that people he knows in the Chicago Jewish community have vouched for a Turkish American whose donation he cites as an indictment of J Street. But Lenny tells us only of **Mehmet Celebi's** sin -- he reportedly was involved in producing an anti-Semitic film -- and doesn't explain why his Chicago friend thinks Celebi's okay.

And whatever Issa's stretches have been, he has also has taken on anti-Israel vituperation during his Arab world travels, as outlined in this [Washington Post profile](#).

Me, I'm breathing slow until after next Tuesday.

Steve runs through the pro-Israel case for President Obama and the Democrats, [in an email blast here](#). **Ari Fleischer, former spokesman to Bush, ran down the case against Monday night at a Republican Jewish Coalition event in Skokie. A spy tells me that Kirk got rousing applause at that event -- but it was nothing compared to the wild reception scored by **Joel Pollak**, running to unseat Rep. **Jan Schakowsky** (D-Ill.) from her suburban Chicago seat. Here's an account of Kirk's speech from the [Belleville News Democrat](#).

McGill University's **Gil Troy, [blogging](#) at the Jerusalem Post, is grateful that for all of the noise recounted in this column and elsewhere, Israel really isn't such a big deal in U.S. elections.

Ironically, Israel's most enthusiastic friends and harshest enemies overplay Israel's centrality in the world. It has long been the anti-Semite's distinguishing tic to blame the Jew for many ills; modern anti-Semites masquerading as "just" anti-Zionists impute to the Jewish State undue importance in singling out Israel for condemnation. The entire BDS - Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions - movement hinges on this exaggeration. Labeling Israel the new South Africa, the boycotters caricature Israel as the great threat to world peace, the world's greatest source of injustice and instability.

Israelis should be relieved that Israel has not been an issue in this American campaign. Recent polls showing just how enthusiastically Americans support Israel should prove even more reassuring. And the late summer survey by the Cohen Center at Brandeis estimating that 63 percent of Jews feel "very much" or "somewhat" connected to Israel while 75 percent agree that caring about Israel is an important part of their Jewish identities, should be even more reassuring.

Nevertheless, despite this popular enthusiasm for Israel, no one should interpret any setback Barack Obama may suffer at the polls as any kind of message about Israel. Nor will a Democratic defeat lift the pressure on Israel. If Obama feels he did better than the pundits predicted, he may feel more empowered to continue pushing Israel around without pressuring Palestinians equally. Alternatively, if the Democrats lose so badly Obama fears he may be a one-term president, he may pressure Israel to give him some victory somewhere. Foreign policy is often the last refuge of a frustrated president.

****Eric Schneiderman**, the New York state senator running for state attorney general, makes his case in an oped for [Voz is Neias](#), saying he will continue the office's tradition of protecting religious Jews in the workplace.

Israel will probably be a big electoral deal if the United States ever elects a first Jewish president -- and if Ask Men magazine has its way, that would be **Jon Stewart, which it has names as this year's "Most Influential Man." **From Ha'aretz**. I can't find it on the Ask Men [website](#) -- the only top ten I see there is common grooming