Political Guide: Dos and Don'ts for Engaging the Jewish Community and Addressing Antisemitism

Overview

This guide is intended to help politicians engage constructively with Jewish communities, address antisemitism, and navigate issues related to Israel during campaigns and throughout their time in office.

While not exhaustive, these principles are intended to distinguish constructive engagement and legitimate policy debate from rhetoric and conduct that contributes to or constitutes antisemitism. We encourage you to use this guide as a resource. Please note all examples used here in this guide are from current or former elected officials, or former candidates for elected office. No one currently running for office is included in this guide. Inclusion in this guide does not mean ADL supports or does not support the individual. ADL is a nonpartisan organization that does not oppose, support or endorse candidates or parties for elected office.

Resources

ADL's Antisemitism Uncovered

ADL's Understanding Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism

ADL Backgrounder: Zionism

ADL Backgrounder: Anti-Zionism

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DO

Engage and Support the Jewish Community

- Publicly express solidarity with Jewish communities, especially in the wake of antisemitic incidents.
- Condemn antisemitism clearly, consistently, and unequivocally, regardless of its political or ideological source.
- Participate in Jewish communal events and build meaningful relationships with Jewish constituents.
- Engage regularly and constructively with mainstream Jewish communal organizations.
- Listen to Jewish communities when concerns about antisemitism arise and take those concerns seriously.

Examples:

> "We simply cannot accept this violence as a normal part of American life," Wolf said. "These senseless acts of violence are not who we are as Pennsylvanians. They're not who we are as Americans."
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> *Former Gov. Tom Wolf (D-PA), October 2018. Statement following the Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh. Source: NBC News.*

> "Hatred, intolerance, and antisemitism have no place in Virginia," Gov. Youngkin said in a statement, in part. "As Governor, the safety and security of all Virginians is my paramount concern. Virginia is the birthplace of the freedom of religion in America, and protecting the community centers and houses of worship of the Jewish people is paramount. But this commitment extends to all religions, including those of the Muslim faith, who are increasingly concerned about backlash."
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> *Former Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R-VA), October 2023. Statement announcing Executive Directive Six to combat antisemitism after Oct. 7. Source: WSLS 10.*

> "Jews have given back so much to this country," the two-term lawmaker said. "As history has taught us, antisemitic tropes and stereotypes, some of which I heard personally on this campaign, will ultimately be the undoing of our democracy if we all don't lean in and speak out—even if it's not politically expedient."
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> *Rep. Dan Goldman (D-NY), June 2026. Concession speech after losing his Democratic primary. Source: Jewish Insider.*

> "This community is on the edge, very understandably," Whitmer said. "We've seen a rise in attacks, especially over the last decade. Especially over the last 10 months. It's important for us to stand up, to stand against it and to thank the people who showed up to support the community, but also call out where we see acts of antisemitism, where we see threats."
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> *Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D-MI), March 2026. Remarks following an attack on Temple Israel in West Bloomfield. Source: Detroit News.*

- Recognize the diversity of the Jewish community and engage respectfully with Jews of different backgrounds, denominations, and perspectives.
- Foster interfaith and cross-community partnerships to combat antisemitism and other forms of hate.
- Support the security of Jewish institutions, including synagogues, schools, community centers, and other communal organizations.
- Support the investigation, prosecution, and accountability of antisemitic hate crimes and other unlawful acts targeting Jews and Jewish institutions.

> "Whether it's a mayor, president, a governor, a rabbi, a teacher, a boss—whatever your sphere of influence—you've got to push back against that, you have to be visible and you have to bring awareness to it in the right way," Holt said.
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> *Mayor David Holt (R-Oklahoma City), February 2023. Remarks at a community town hall held following a rise in local antisemitic incidents. Source: Oklahoman.*

> "No one should be threatened or made to feel unsafe because of who they are. It is critical that we work across party lines to stop and reverse this dangerous trend by enhancing physical security at Jewish communal institutions, increasing resources for education, and by speaking out against antisemitic hatred whenever and wherever we see it."
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> *Sen. Jacky Rosen (D-NV), May 2026. Statement reacting to ADL's 2025 Audit of Antisemitic Incidents. Source: Rosen.senate.gov.*

> "This is not about speech. You can be an antisemite all you want in America, you're just not going to be in the Republican Party doing it."
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> *Former Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC), April 2026. Campaign event remarks. Source: ABC News 4*

> "Unfortunately, we have seen a resurgence of another vile ideology in recent times—antisemitism, the world's oldest form of hate. Republicans in the House and the Senate rallied to the defense of American Jews facing this rising tide of hatred from the radical fringes of the Left. I hope all of us alike will recommit ourselves to upholding the dignity of every individual in this country and around the world."
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> *Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX), November 2025. Senate floor remarks. Source: Cornyn.senate.gov.*

> "Colleges and universities claim to value diversity and inclusion but have failed to address dangerous antisemitic incidents that have been plaguing campuses for the past year. My Preventing Antisemitic Harassment on Campus Act is a critical step toward ensuring that our educational institutions carry out their responsibility to protect Jewish students from hate and discrimination."
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> *Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL), October 2024. Official statement introducing the Preventing Antisemitic Harassment on Campus Act. Source: Rubio.senate.gov.*

- Protect the civil rights of Jewish Americans and oppose discrimination, harassment, and intimidation directed at Jews, including on college campuses, in the workplace and in commercial and public spaces.
- Promote Holocaust education and education about Jewish identity and contemporary antisemitism.

> "There were two places in the world where Jews felt really safe. One, of course, was Israel, and the second was the United States of America," Hoyer said. "That's not true today, and that is a sad statement of what's going on in the country today. So you all need to be involved. You all need to, when you see something that's not right, not fair, not just, stand up, speak up and make a difference."
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> *Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD), May 2026. Remarks at a reception. Source: Jewish Insider.*

> "There is no place in this city for shutting out any community—especially in pursuit of political gain," McDuffie wrote. "Not antisemitism. Not Islamophobia. Not racism. Not sexism."
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> *Kenyan McDuffie, former Washington, D.C. Democratic mayoral candidate, March 2026. Campaign email criticizing rivals who pledged to boycott Jewish community events. Source: Jewish Insider.*

> "Since October 7th, Jews in America have faced an unprecedented surge in antisemitism. These are not just numbers, these are real stories impacting real people," said Lankford. "Jewish students being targeted on campuses. Synagogues being vandalized. People being attacked in the streets simply because of their faith and heritage. That is not who we are as a nation, and we unequivocally condemn antisemitism in all its forms. Every American deserves to live their faith freely. That is worth fighting for."
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> *Sen. James Lankford (R-OK), May 2026. Statement introducing the bipartisan Jewish American Security Act. Source: Lankford.senate.gov.*

> "In the last six months, I've seen more antisemitism on the right than I have in my entire life. This is a poison, and I believe we are facing an existential crisis in our party and in our country."
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> *Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX), October 2025. Remarks opening the Republican Jewish Coalition's 40th-anniversary summit in Las Vegas. Source: X.*

> "Mississippi stands with the members of Beth Israel Congregation. This heinous act will never be tolerated, and the perpetrator should face the full and solemn weight of their actions. I have directed the Mississippi Department of Public Safety to support our federal law enforcement partners in any manner necessary as they investigate this horrible situation and pursue state charges."
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> *Gov. Tate Reeves (R-MS), January 2026. Following the arson attack on Beth Israel Congregation in Jackson, Mississippi. Source: X.*

DO

Discuss Israel (Responsibly)

- Recognize the nearly 4,000-year Jewish connection to Israel, and support the legitimacy of Jewish self-determination alongside the rights and aspirations of other peoples.
- Recognize the distinction between legitimate policy debate regarding US-Israel relations and rhetoric that delegitimizes Jewish self-determination or promotes antisemitism.
- Apply consistent standards when discussing Israel and other nations.
- Distinguish criticism of Israeli government policies and/or officials from rhetoric directed at Jews, Zionists, or questioning Israel's right to exist.
- Recognize that Zionists are not monolithic and hold diverse views on Israeli policies and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- Engage respectfully with both Jewish and Palestinian communities.

Examples:

> Asked at the Politico Security Summit in Washington on Tuesday if she still calls herself a Zionist, Sen. Elissa Slotkin (D-MI) said, "I believe in a Jewish State of Israel, yes. And that to me isn't a radical thing to say and I always have."
> "I can say that in the same breath that I criticize the military policy of Bibi Netanyahu," she added.
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> *Sen. Elissa Slotkin (D-MI), May 2026. Source: Jewish Insider.*

> "None of us wants to see death and suffering. We all want to see the violence come to an end," Hogan said. "The way to solve this humanitarian crisis and to achieve a cease-fire is for Hamas leaders to release every single one of the hostages, bring them home and then they should surrender and be held accountable for their crimes on October 7."
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> *Former Gov. Larry Hogan (R-MD), March 2024. Remarks to the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington. Source: WJLA/ABC7.*

DON'T

Engage in Antisemitic Conduct or Rhetoric

- Don't excuse, minimize, or ignore antisemitism because it comes from political allies or advances a preferred cause.
- Don't define or dictate what antisemitism is or isn't for Jewish communities.
- Don't partner with or legitimize individuals or organizations that promote or excuse any form of antisemitism.
- Don't use or amplify antisemitic stereotypes, conspiracy theories, Holocaust denial or comparisons, or rhetoric that demonizes or dehumanizes Jews.
- Never invoke stereotypes about Jewish power, money, influence, loyalty, or control.

Examples of what not to do:

> "Today, the Jews have become a global menace. A better term might be plague, as they appear to be intertwined with just about every crime and vice imaginable."
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> *David Blomstrom, former Washington independent congressional candidate, 2026. Statement on a campaign policy page titled "Jew Reform Measures." Source: davidblomstrom.com.*

> "The United States government is currently occupied by a dual-loyalty regime that has placed the strategic and financial interests of a foreign apartheid state—Israel—above the safety, rights, and will of the American people. For decades, a powerful Zionist lobby has infiltrated every level of our government, from Congress to the executive branch, ensuring that billions of our tax dollars fund the slow-motion genocide of the Palestinian people while silencing any voice of dissent."
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> *Cynthia McKinney, former Georgia Democratic congressional candidate, 2026. Source: Mckinneyforgeorgia.com.*

> "They move millions in dark money to accomplish a single goal, to preserve their power, so that they can turn us against one another, instead of our leaders turning towards the moral change we all know to be necessary," Mamdani said.
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> *Mayor Zohran Mamdani (D-New York City), June 2026. Remarks at a Get Out the Vote rally with Sen. Bernie Sanders ahead of New York's congressional primaries. Source: CNN.*

> "It is nothing but an international extortion racket by the Jews to bleed, blackmail, extort, and terrorize their enemies."
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> *Arthur Jones, former Illinois Republican congressional candidate, 2018. Comment on the Holocaust made in a televised interview. Source: CNN.*

- Don’t use antisemitic tropes, symbols, imagery, or conspiracy theories.
- Never hold Jews collectively responsible for the actions of the Israeli government.
- Don’t characterize Jewish political participation as inherently suspect, disloyal, or corrupt.
- Never exclude or discriminate against individuals because they are Jewish.
- Never target Jewish individuals or institutions because of their Jewish identity.
- Never threaten, harass, encourage, or justify violence against Jews.
- Never tolerate vandalism, harassment, discrimination, or violence directed at Jewish individuals, institutions, or communal spaces.

> “AIPAC is a pro-Israel lobby and they need to be defeated for that reason. But they also represent white supremacy and everything that comes with that.”
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> *Former Rep. Jamaal Bowman (D-NY), December 2024. Interview reflecting on his 2024 primary loss, in which AIPAC spent heavily against him. Source: YouTube.*

> “When Maureen gets into Congress, she'll write legislation so that all Zionism and support of Zionism is undoubtedly Anti-Semitic, since it's Zionists harming the Semites. She'll turn Karnes ICE Detention Center into a prison for American Zionists and former ICE officers for human trafficking. (It will also be a castration processing center for pedophiles which will probably be most of the Zionists).”
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> *Maureen Galindo, Texas Democratic congressional candidate, May 2026. Referring to herself in the third person. Source: Instagram.*

DON'T

Delegitimize Jewish Self-Determination or Political Participation

- Don't blur the distinction between criticism of Israeli government policies and criticism of Jews, Zionism, or Jewish self-determination.
- Don't deny the legitimacy of Jewish self-determination or argue that Israel alone, among the world's nation-states, lacks the right to exist.
- Don't apply standards to Israel that are not routinely applied to comparable states without articulating a principled, consistently applied basis.
- Don't support the exclusion of Zionists from civic, political, academic, professional, or communal life because of their identity or beliefs.

Examples of what not to do:

> "The secular government of nuclear armed Israel has proven that they are beyond capable of dealing with their enemies and are capable of and are in the process of systematically cleansing them from the land."
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> *Former Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA), July 2025. Post arguing against continued U.S. military aid to Israel. Source: X.*

> "Anyone who visits the West Bank under Israeli occupation can see an apartheid system at work. Meanwhile, Gaza remains in ruins, the humanitarian situation there remains catastrophic, and Hamas remains armed."
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> *Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), May 2026. Written in a New York Times guest essay, "The Hard Truth My Party Needs to Face." Source: The New York Times.*

> "I would have come out sooner, but I had to call my opponent and concede, and it took a while to find Ed Gallrein in Tel Aviv," Representative Thomas Massie said in his concession speech on Tuesday night, referring to his Republican opponent.
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> *Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY), May 2026. Concession speech after losing his primary, in which pro-Israel groups spent heavily against him; note: Gallrein was not in Israel. Source: The New York Times.*

- Don't refuse engagement with individuals or organizations solely because they are Zionist.
- Don't support campaigns, like the BDS movement, that seek to boycott, divest from, or sanction Israel as uniquely illegitimate or deny it treatment afforded to other nations.

> "Susan Collins's latest financial report just came out. A staggering one-third of her money raised this quarter came directly from AIPAC. Senator Collins is bought and paid for by Benjamin Netanyahu, and she votes accordingly."
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> *Graham Platner, former Democratic Maine Senate candidate, June 2026. Source: X.*

> "If you are a Zionist in America, you are a traitor to this country, and under 18 U.S. Code § 2381, you deserve the highest consequences for your betrayal. History shows exactly why so many nations have been forced to expel you, and it is time for America to do the same.
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> We must deport every single illegal and every single Zionist from this nation. It is time to take back our country, restore our sovereignty, and uphold the rule of law without apology. We will no longer tolerate the compromise of our national security by those who place foreign interests above our own. As California's next governor, I am an American Nationalist."
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> *Alicia Lapp, former California Republican gubernatorial primary candidate, May 2026. Source: X.*

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