

Bob Dole



NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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JERUSALEM EMBASSY

DOLE JOINED BY MOYNIHAN IN BILL TO MOVE U.S. EMBASSY IN ISRAEL TO JERUSALEM; CHANGE IN GROUNDBREAKING REQUIREMENT BOOSTS SUPPORT; BOTTOM LINE REMAINS - MOVE BY 1999

Today, I am introducing S. 1322, the Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act of 1995. I am pleased to do so with the distinguished senior Senator from New York, Senator Moynihan, as the lead co-sponsor. As the Senate knows, Senator Moynihan has been the expert and the leader on Jerusalem for his entire career. I am pleased that he has joined with Senator Kyl, Senator Inouye and other co-sponsors in this important legislation. I would like to take special note of the roles of Senator Kyl and Senator Inouye in developing this legislation, and in agreeing to the changes included today.

Comparison to S.770

This legislation is very similar to S. 770, introduced on May 9, 1995. S. 770 currently has 62 co-sponsors -- and 61 of them are included on the legislation I am introducing today. There is one major change between S. 770 and S. 1322 -- the provision requiring groundbreaking in 1996 for construction of a new embassy has been deleted, and minor or conforming changes have been made. All other major provisions are identical: findings on the importance of Jerusalem, statement of policy on recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, semi-annual reporting requirements, and, most important, the requirement that the American Embassy be open in Jerusalem no later than May 31, 1999.

A number of members expressed concern about the potential impact of the requirement for breaking ground on construction next year. Clearly 62% of the Senate was comfortable with the provision. The lead co-sponsor, Senator Kyl, felt particularly strongly about some action occurring next year -- the 3000th anniversary of Jerusalem. But Senator Kyl and the other co-sponsors have agreed to remove the requirement in the interests of gaining even broader support.

Unchallengeable Commitment to Middle East Peace Process

All of us in the Senate are aware of the possible impact our actions could have on the peace process in the Middle East. We want the peace process to succeed. As I said upon introducing S. 770, "The peace process has made great strides and our commitment to that process is unchallengeable." Last spring, the fate of the declaration of principles "Phase II" agreement was very much up in the air. The July deadline was missed. The August deadline was missed. Fortunately, the Oslo II accord was signed last month. Implementation is underway. While always subject to disruption and always under attack from extremists, the peace process is working. The toughest issues are yet to be resolved in final status talks, including Jerusalem.

In my view, the United States does not have to wait for the end of final status talks to begin the process of moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem. As both S. 770 and today's legislation state: "Jerusalem should be recognized as the capital of Israel and the United States Embassy should be officially open in Jerusalem no later than May 31, 1999." In my view, we should begin the process of moving now and we should conclude it by May 31, 1999. That is the bottom line, and that is what S. 1322 does.

Administration Should Help to Achieve Unity

In the five months since the introduction of S. 770, the Clinton administration has done nothing to bridge our differences. A questionable legal opinion was offered and a veto threat was made, but no substantive contacts have occurred.

(more)

Not one. I am disappointed the administration has ignored what is obviously a strong bipartisan majority in the Senate. I am disappointed the administration has made no effort at all to communicate with the lead sponsors of this legislation. Our hope is to unify, not to divide, on the sensitive issue of Jerusalem. Our hope is to move ahead on this issue. Our hope is the administration will support the legislation to move the Embassy. In two weeks, Prime Minister Rabin, Mayor of Jerusalem Olmert and hundreds of others will assemble in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol to commemorate the 3000th anniversary of Jerusalem. Many of us noted that the American Ambassador to Israel could not find the time to attend opening ceremonies for the 3000th anniversary of Jerusalem in Israel. I am confident that the Congress will celebrate this historic event in a much more appropriate manner.

In the coming days I expect additional co-sponsors will be added to the Jerusalem Embassy legislation. I also expect decisions to be made in the administration and in the Congress about how and when to proceed with this legislation.

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* Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 3:45 p.m.