



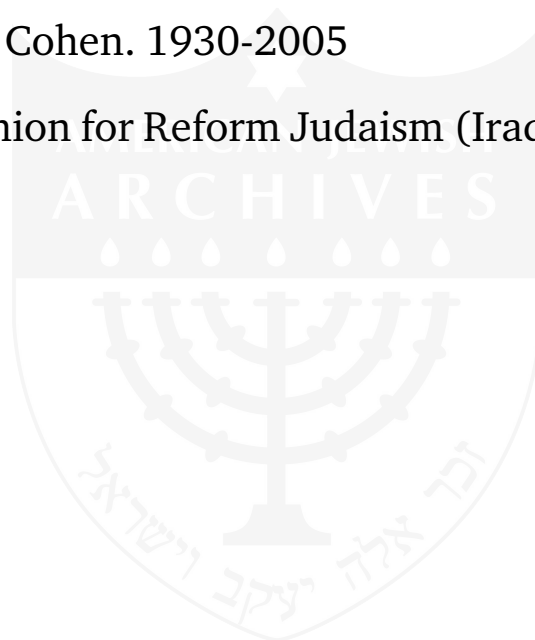
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2005.



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Locals sign ad ripping Reform movement on Iraq

By Rick Hellman
Editor

Two Kansas Citians — attorney Barton Cohen and businessman John Uhlmann — signed a Republican Jewish Coalition ad that was to appear this week in the New York Times, rebuking the Union for Reform Judaism for passing a resolution calling on President Bush to begin withdrawing troops from Iraq.



"The very threat of America leaving plays into the hands of our enemy."

John Uhlmann

pose the nomination of Judge Samuel Alito Jr. to the U.S. Supreme Court, saying his approval "would threaten protection of the most fundamental rights" that the Reform movement supports. "On choice, women's rights, civil rights and the scope of federal power," Alito would "shift the ideological balance of the Supreme Court on matters of core concern to the Reform Movement," according to the resolution.

Stimulating debate

That was enough to get Bart Cohen angry. So when the RJC sent an e-mail to board members, asking if any of them were Reform Jews who opposed the Iraq resolution, Cohen responded affirmatively. He is a member of two Reform congregations — The Temple, Congregation B'nai Jehudah, and the New Reform Temple.

"I'm very upset with the Union for Reform Judaism," Cohen said. "It has engaged in taking positions on political matters, which I don't think is the place for the Union for Reform Judaism. ...

"There are members who disagree. And it's wrong to call on congregations to 'advocate for policies consistent with the principles set forth in the resolutions.'

"The URJ should focus on strengthening of our congregations and getting more people to have a better understanding of our religion, and not be engaging in this kind of politics. ... It certainly diminishes their effectiveness by engaging in partisan politics."

For John Uhlmann, who, like Cohen, belongs to both NRT and B'nai Jehudah, the issue is that the resolution places Reform Judaism on the wrong side of the Iraq question.

"Radical Islamists' best hope is that America will cut and run from Iraq before Iraqis have enough strength to repel the terrorists," Uhlmann said. "The very threat of America leaving plays into the hands of our enemy. ...

"In a vain attempt to be relevant, aging liberals in charge of the Reform movement and other leading national Jewish organizations have decided to create the perception that Jews support the same objectives of the Jihadists ...

"Many Jews believe that it is neither true nor good that American Jews are perceived as being for America to leave Iraq on the terrorists' terms, not America's. That is why I am so grateful to have the opportunity to stand up and join others who have proudly signed and supported these ads."

On Tuesday, as a follow-up to the resolution passed in Houston, the Reform movement issued a statement saying its top leaders had written to President Bush, calling for a clear exit strategy from the war in Iraq, with some troop withdrawal beginning after this week's parliamentary elections.

URJ President Rabbi Eric Yoffie ripped the RJC ad as "predictable and misleading."



"What is surprising, and disappointing, is that the ad bears no relationship to our policy."

Rabbi Eric Yoffie

Criticism was to be expected from GOP partisans, he said. "What is surprising, and disappointing is that the ad bears no relationship to our policy," Rabbi Yoffie said. "We are, to be clear, committed to freedom for the Iraqi people; we disagree with the Republican Jewish Coalition about how to bring that about. One of our goals in passing a resolution at our Biennial was to stimulate a debate on the war within the American Jewish community. We are pleased to see that debate beginning."

For more information, including the full text of the Iraq resolution, and the other resolutions passed in Houston, visit www.urj.org and click on "Biennial" or "press room."

TO THE UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM: FREEDOM IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR



The recent statement by the Union for Reform Judaism saying American Jews oppose the President on Iraq is misleading and wrong.

We support the President and the War on Terrorism. We stand behind our troops and their mission of creating a safe, democratic Iraq. This mission is vital not only for the continuing fight against terrorism and the stability of the Middle East, but also for making the world a safer place for our children.



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commitments to them; and specifically to:

- A. Demand that our service men and women receive appropriate flak jackets, armor and other equipment to afford them maximum protection as they carry out their mission; and
 - B. Demand that adequate funds be made available to the Department of Defense and Veterans Administration to ensure that United States military personnel wounded in connection with the Iraq war receive the highest quality medical care available and that they and their families are afforded the necessary support (including counseling) to cope with their injuries;
3. Call upon the Bush Administration immediately to provide more transparency regarding all aspects of the war and a clear exit strategy to the American public with specific goals for troop withdrawal; some withdrawal of troops should begin after the completion of the parliamentary elections (currently scheduled for December 15, 2005) with the continuation of withdrawal implemented as soon as possible in a way that maintains stability in the nation and empowers Iraqi forces to provide for their national security;
 4. Call upon Congress to:
 - A. Provide more diligent oversight of the war and the expenditures related to it;
 - B. Promote efforts to bring about, as soon as feasible, a withdrawal that supports peace and stability; and
 - C. Ensure that the financial burden of the war fall not just on the poor and on future generations, but be shared equitably;
 5. Call for a bipartisan, independent commission to determine the lessons learned from our strategic, intelligence, planning, and implementation failures before and during the war;
 6. Call on all nations, especially those in the region, to:
 - A. Terminate support for the insurgents and terrorists,
 - B. Actively support the democratically elected Iraqi government,
 - C. Provide tangible support, in the form of training and equipment, to facilitate the development of a professional Iraqi security force, and
 - D. Assist in rebuilding the infrastructure of the country;
 7. Condemn, in the strongest possible terms, violations of the Geneva Conventions and other applicable laws, including torture and abuse of prisoners and detainees in U.S. custody;
 8. Condemn those who would use opposition to the war in Iraq as justification for anti-Israel efforts;
 9. Call on congregations to:
 - A. Provide a venue to address these issues;
 - B. Advocate consistent with the principles set forth in this resolution; and
 - C. Adopt respectful and meaningful methods of acknowledging the contribution of our military such as the use of prayers for the welfare of service members, listing names of military personnel lost in the line of duty in Kaddish prayers or in temple bulletins, or other appropriate ways.

1 October 23, 2005, New York Times, <http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=F10910F9385B0C708EDDA90994DD404482>

2 <http://www.wmd.gov/report/index.html>

3 <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>

4 CBS News Poll, Oct. 3-5, 2005, N=808, 64% of all adults responded "Disapprove" when asked: "Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush is handling the situation with Iraq?" Newsweek Poll, Sept. 29-30, 2005, N= 1,004, 62% of all adults responded "Disapprove" when asked the same question. CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll, Sept. 16-18, 2005, N=818, asked "Which comes closest to your view about what the U.S. should now do about the number of US troops in Iraq? 33% of all adults responded that the U.S. should withdraw some troops, and 30% responded that the U.S. should withdraw all of its troops.

5 Associated Press/IPSOS poll, Sept. 16-18, 2005, N=1,000, 65% of adults responded that we are spending too much to fight the war and rebuild Iraq. CBS News/New York Times Poll, Sept. 9-13, 2005, N=1,167, 90% of adults disapprove of the U.S. cutting spending on domestic programs, like education and health care, to pay for the war with Iraq.



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RESOLUTION ON THE WAR IN IRAQ

Submitted by the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, Congregation Shir Hadash of Los Gatos, California, Congregation Tikun V'or of Ithaca, New York, Temple Beth Or of Everett, Washington, Temple Emanuel of Worcester, Massachusetts, Temple Sinai of Brookline, Massachusetts, and Temple Sinai of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to the 68th Union for Reform Judaism General Assembly

BACKGROUND

The war in Iraq is clearly one of the most challenging moral issues facing America.

It is true that a brutal dictator has been removed and is now being tried by a national tribunal for mass murder. In removing Saddam Hussein, there has been movement toward democracy and toward freedom of press and speech that was unimaginable just a few years ago. A long-time destabilizing regional force has been eliminated.


However, more than 2,000 U.S. service members have lost their lives, over 14,000 others have been wounded, and scores of thousands of Iraqis have been killed and wounded. Violence in Iraq continues, with new casualties virtually every day. Resentment against the United States is breeding a new generation of insurgents and terrorists. Iraq is in danger of splitting into regional cantons that would provide an additional source of destabilization.

Meanwhile, Pentagon officials have warned that the combined resources devoted to fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan weaken our ability to deal with other conflicts. ¹Recruitment to the U.S. Armed Forces is down, and, to maintain troop levels, the military has instituted a controversial "stop-loss" program (sometimes referred to as the "backdoor draft") that extends service members' tours of duty beyond the limits of their contracts. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs spending has decreased per patient over the last decade, yet the VA continues to face budget cuts.

Three years ago, the leaders of the Union for Reform Judaism addressed the prospects of war in Iraq. In September 2002, the Executive Committee of the Union's Board of Trustees discussed, at length, the morality and efficacy of the use of force. It examined the insights from Jewish moral rules regarding war and related issues, insights that remain relevant today, including: the obligation to defend innocents derived from the duty to rescue (Lev. 19:16: "Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor;" BT Sanhedrin 74a, Baba Kama 28a, Shulchan Aruch Hoshen Mishpat 425:1); the justifications for preemptive wars (BT, Sotah 44b, Eruvin 45a) and how it applies to a situation where non-conventional weapons were widely suspected; the need to pursue vigorously peaceful options before the use of force could be justified (Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Melachim 6:1); the need to protect civilians (MT Melachim 6:7); and the need, derived from the rules of *bal taschit* (do not waste), to provide for the protection of environmental and economic infrastructures that would allow civilian life to resume as soon as possible after warfare (Deut. 20:19-20; Ibn Ezra commentary on Deut. 20:19; MT Melachim 6:10). A variety of other insights from the Jewish tradition are also relevant, from the protections of captives (See, e.g. Deut. 21:10-14), to the obligation of the judges and leaders of the community to be forthright people who would neither lie nor mislead (Deuteronomy 16:18-20).

These discussions of Jewish tradition and U.S. policy options led to the adoption of the position on

Options

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"Unilateral Action by the U.S. Against Iraq" that supported military action by the U.S. – even unilateral action if necessary – only in the context of four propositions:

- a. International cooperation is far, far better than unilateral action, and the U.S. must explore all reasonable means of attaining such support;
- b. Non-military action is always preferable to military action, and the U.S. must fully explore all options to resolve the situation through such means;
- c. If the effort to obtain international cooperation and support through the United Nations fails, the U.S. must work with other nations to obtain cooperation in any military action; and
- d. The President should not act without Congressional approval of the use of force, including any unilateral military action taken by the U.S.

In the intervening time period, the Reform Movement has spoken out and taken action on several related issues. Prior to the invasion, the URJ advocated on behalf of a congressional resolution, introduced by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA), that would have required the Administration to return to Congress to obtain authorization prior to deploying troops to Iraq. In May 2004, the Union denounced the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and other prisons. The Union and other groups successfully advocated for a Senate amendment to the Defense appropriations bill prohibiting cruel and inhumane treatment of detainees. In June 2004, the Central Conference of American Rabbis passed a resolution that raised concerns about the false claims on which the war was based, the abuse of prisoners, the need to be visibly and strongly supportive of our military personnel, and the need to set a clearly-defined and measurable exit strategy for the withdrawal of Coalition military personnel from Iraq. Twice since the war began, these concerns about the war were raised directly with the Secretary of Defense by senior Religious Action Center staff.

Today, as we apply the standards outlined by the Union leadership in 2002, we find that many of our expectations have not been met. Now we know, based on the reports of two bi-partisan commissions appointed by President Bush, the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction, chaired by former Senator Charles Robb and Judge Laurence Silberman, and the 9/11 Commission, chaired by former Republican Governor Tom Kean and former Democratic Representative Lee Hamilton, that many of the premises on which the Congress, the American public and the Union's Executive Committee based their prescriptions were false: that no weapons of mass destruction were stored in Iraq; that there was no attempt on the part of the government of Saddam Hussein to purchase uranium from the nation of Niger during the years leading up to the invasion;² that there were no ties between Saddam Hussein and the events of September 11, 2001; and that there was no cooperation between Iraq and Al Qaeda that has led to terrorist attacks.³ These mistakes – be they misrepresentations or misunderstandings – have significantly undermined American credibility.

Furthermore, lack of adequate planning for the aftermath of the invasion greatly aggravated the chaos and instability. Experts have widely criticized the lack of an adequate supply of flak jackets and Armored Personnel Carriers; the failure to protect American forces by guarding Saddam Hussein's ammunition dumps whose weapons now maim and kill American soldiers; the failure to keep an Iraqi army selectively intact (as we did in Kosovo); the failure to ensure the delivery of basic services to Iraqi citizens; and the refusal to accept the offers of the United Nations and individual countries that had not fought in the invasion to provide on-the-ground peacekeepers and reconstruction assistance. The result has been to provide fertile ground for the insurgency.

American public opinion, and Jewish opinion in particular, has turned against the war: nearly two-thirds of Americans disapprove of the Administration's handling of the situation in Iraq and would favor removing some or all troops from Iraq.⁴ Moreover, Americans are uneasy about the rising price tag for the war, which has already cost over \$200 billion, diverting money and resources that are urgently needed at home.⁵ Some have argued that future generations will continue to have to pay this cost, as a result of concurrent tax cuts coupled with spending of borrowed funds. Two-thirds of American Jews now describe the war as a mistake and a majority seeks to bring American troops safely and speedily home.⁶

Nonetheless, with much of Iraq's infrastructure now undermined, the old leadership removed, and new leadership still in flux, a contentious debate on how and when the U.S. can withdraw divides the nation. Ironically, some who supported the war now think we should withdraw immediately, while some who opposed the war believe we cannot begin to leave until the situation stabilizes. Opponents of immediate withdrawal argue that the U.S. should not establish a timetable for withdrawal because if we withdraw too soon, Iraq will devolve into civil war and become a haven for terrorists. Opponents also note that if we set deadlines and then fail to meet them, we will be perceived as weak by our enemies. Supporters of a more imminent withdrawal argue that Americans and Iraqis continue to die as a result of the insurgency, and that rather than maintaining order in Iraq, the presence of the United States as an occupying power engenders resentment and resistance from the populace and creates sympathy for the insurgents to continue fighting. Both sides are hopeful that Iraq's newly adopted Constitution and impending elections are steps that will lead to increased stability, making U.S. disengagement more realistic.

There are growing voices in this country that are calling for fundamental changes in U.S. policy in Iraq, changes that will bring our troops home safely and soon, and promote the creation of a sovereign and peaceful Iraq. Sadly, within the organized opposition to the war there are a number of groups espousing radical, anti-Israel rhetoric (including a number of members of ANSWER – Act Now to Stop War and End Racism). In a second major coalition, United for Peace and Justice, there are fewer such voices. But, the absence of mainstream American Jewish organizations from this debate has created a vacuum in which other voices are manipulating messages about Jews and Israel in the context of and in opposition to the Iraq war.

However, another coalition has demonstrated goals and values more consistent with our own. "Win Without War" has attracted the support of many mainstream American organizations, including NAACP, National Council of Churches, Sierra Club, Physicians for Social Responsibility, United Church of Christ and United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society. Among other things, Win Without War calls on the Bush Administration to announce a plan to end the occupation that includes target dates for troop withdrawal; transform the military occupation into an Iraqi-led, regionally-backed, and internationally supported effort to achieve stability and a representative government; and redirect funds to support Iraq-directed reconstruction and humanitarian needs.

There is a belief among some Iraqis that the United States intends to occupy Iraq on a long term basis, and this perception has fueled the insurgency with escalating violence. The Iraqi people ratified the permanent constitution by a referendum conducted on October 15, 2005, and parliamentary elections under that constitution are now scheduled for December 15, 2005. The ratification of the Iraqi constitution and the scheduled parliamentary elections are critical steps in establishing a functional, stable government in Iraq. These recent events present an opportunity for the United States to establish a plan to withdraw United States Armed Forces from Iraq that would support the legitimacy of the Iraqi Government and the assumption of responsibility by Iraqi forces for security and public safety. Furthermore, we believe that a plan for a phased, tactical withdrawal is the best way to ensure the safe return of our Armed Forces personnel, who will continue to be put in harm's way if they remain in Iraq indefinitely or are withdrawn prematurely and with inadequate organization.

As the United States enters its third year of an untenable war, with no end in sight, it is incumbent upon the leadership of the Reform Movement to confront these issues and take a position.

THEREFORE, the Union for Reform Judaism resolves to:

1. Reaffirm the principles espoused in its 2002 pre-invasion policy statement to guide us when and if future conflicts arise, and as a touchstone for assessing our current policy in Iraq, and note with grave concern that those principles were not followed when we went to war;
2. Commend our service women and men (and their families) who have answered duty's call and served our nation honorably, often with valor and distinction, and who have earned our respect and gratitude and that of the American people, and support generous benefits for them, both in Iraq and at home, thus honoring those who serve our nation and fulfilling our

To: Idfry@fry-wagner.com

Subject: Rabbi Gellman Challenges Reform Movement on Iraq

Prominent Reform Rabbi Marc Gellman Challenges Reform Movement's Iraq War Resolution

December 19, 2005

Saddam Hussein "was a trainer, a protector and a funder of terrorists around the world."

Historical Blindness: The Union of Reform Judaism's vote to oppose the war in Iraq was a mistake and embarrassment for my movement

Dec. 16, 2005 - The movement of which I am a member has just voted against a war that I support. This vote by the Union of Reform Judaism was the first vote by a major national Jewish organization or religious movement opposing the war in Iraq.

This war was and is being fought for American reasons, not Jewish reasons. However, to see this war that toppled one of Israel's fiercest enemies—an anti-Semitic dictator who sent \$25,000 to the families of every jihadist who had been able to kill and maim Israeli children and other innocents—opposed by Jews is more than an act of ingratitude to this country and this president. This vote was an act of stunning and incomprehensible historical blindness.

One argument raised in support of the antiwar resolution passed in Houston was that Saddam Hussein had nothing to do with 9/11 and was thus an illegal and inappropriate military target. This putative fact is both debatable and irrelevant. The idea that unless we have a credit-card receipt showing that Saddam Hussein paid for Muhammad Atta's plane tickets to New York, he must be presumed to be an innocent in the war on terror is ludicrous. He was a trainer, a protector and a funder of terrorists around the world.

"This vote was an act of stunning and incomprehensible historical blindness."

A far more compelling Jewish reason to support the war in Iraq comes from recent Jewish history in the clear and tragic records of the Holocaust. On Nov. 18, 1944, John McCloy, the assistant secretary of War, sent the following response on behalf of President Franklin D. Roosevelt to John Pehle of the War

Refugee Board. Pehle had forwarded to the president on Nov. 8 the anguished and urgent request to bomb the railroad lines leading up to and the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau in order to disrupt the genocidal Nazi killing machine. McCloy wrote:

Dear Mr. Pehle, I refer to your letter of November 8th in which you forwarded the report of two eye witnesses on the notorious German concentration and extermination camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau in Upper Silesia. The Operation Staff of the War Department has given careful consideration to your suggestion that the bombing of these camps be undertaken.

In consideration of this proposal the following points were brought out:

- a. Positive destruction of these camps would necessitate precision bombing, employing heavy or medium bombardment, or attack by low flying or dive bombing aircraft, preferably the latter.*
- b. The target is beyond the maximum range of medium bombardment, dive bombers and fighter bombers located in United Kingdom, France or Italy.*
- c. Use of heavy bombardment from United Kingdom bases would necessitate a hazardous round trip flight unescorted of approximately 2,000 miles over enemy territory.*
- d. At the present critical stage of the war in Europe, our strategic air forces are engaged in the destruction of industrial target systems vital to the dwindling war potential of the enemy, from which they should not be diverted. The positive solution to this problem is the earliest possible victory over Germany, to which end we should exert our entire means.*

...

Based on the above, as well as the most uncertain, if not dangerous effect such a bombing would have on the object to be attained, the War Department has felt that it should not, at least for the present, undertake these operations.

Sincerely,

John McCloy

Assistant Secretary of War

The Jews of Europe are now the Kurds of Iraq, and the Shiites, and the Marsh Arabs. The point of war is not only to defend one's own country from attack but also to free from the jaws of death millions of innocent human beings who lack the military means to secure their own freedom. This may not be a universally supported political or military view of war, but it is a religious view of war, and it is my view of this and other wars. I do not know a single Kurd or a single Marsh Arab or a single Iraqi Shiite, but I do know that they have been slaughtered by the thousands, and because of this war they are now free. The Iraqi killing machine has been destroyed. I also know, and every person of even moderate intelligence also knows, that if our troops withdraw now, before victory has been fully achieved they will be slaughtered again. When I say never again in memory of the Holocaust, I don't mean "never again Jews," I mean "never again anyone."

It matters not one wit to me that they are not Jewish nor even that they may not be grateful to America. All that matters to me is that they are made in

God's image and their lives are no longer held tight in the bloody maw of a genocidal dictator. The Jews of Europe and the Kurds of Iraq may both have been outside the strictly delimited aims of the war in Europe or the war in Iraq, but their cries must reach some listening ears and sensitive souls. It is deeply disappointing to me to know that people in my movement of Judaism with whom I share a belief that my daughter deserves the same spiritual horizons as my son cannot feel the need for freedom of those victims of genocide whose cries reach God even if they often do not reach the front pages of the morning papers.

"The point of war is not only to defend one's own country from attack but also to free from the jaws of death millions of innocent human beings who lack the military means to secure their own freedom."

I also feel, and I know, that many of the good Reform Jews who went to Houston for our convention also feel deep solidarity and compassion for the black Muslim victims of genocide in Darfur, and about the Bosnian Muslims and about the Tutsis of Rwanda. What I do not understand and cannot comprehend is why they cannot also feel a sacrificial solidarity with the suffering people of Iraq who because of this war are now free.

I am thinking of Abraham Lincoln, and I am thinking of the Exodus and I am thinking of Isaiah. President Lincoln insisted on reading the numbers of Confederate dead at every cabinet meeting and one cabinet secretary protested this practice, "Who are they to us, Mr. President?" Lincoln answered, "Thank God, the world is larger than your heart."

The Bible describes the people who left Egypt in the Exodus as a "mixed multitude." This means that when my people went free out of the house of bondage, other people went free with us. I am uplifted and sustained by my faith in a God whose strong hand and outstretched arm, extended not only to the Jewish slaves in Egypt but to all the slaves in Egypt. I believe that promise of freedom is still God's will for all people in all times who sleep in the dust and despair of other houses of bondage and live in fear under the rule of other Pharaohs.

Isaiah (25:4), speaking for God, commands us, "You are a refuge to the poor, to the needy in distress, a shelter from the storm." This war, and the larger war of which it is a part, is not a war against terror for me. It is a war of refuge, a war of shelter. A religious movement should feel that, and I am disconsolate that they do not. The Reform movement in Judaism has no official hierarchy and does not speak for all Reform Jews. Their resolutions bind no one and compel no one to do anything. Sometime anarchy is a good thing. That we embarrassed ourselves before America means little to me. That we may have embarrassed ourselves before the survivors of the kingdom of night and before

the commandment to freedom from our God is a matter of much more gravity.

I do not pretend that my interpretation of God's will that all oppressed people should go free is in fact God's will. What I do know is that I could not worship a God for whom this was not a sacred commandment. I do not pretend that the liberation of all oppressed people everywhere is either possible or politically or militarily realistic, but it is the only possible spiritual goal that can save our world, and it is my view and my reading of the mandates of my faith. I am sorry my coreligionists could not feel more clearly and more urgently this commandment of liberation for the suffering people of Iraq. I know they do not speak for me, and I can do no more than humbly presume that they do not speak for God.

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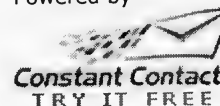
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Republican Jewish Coalition | 50 F Street, NW | Suite 100 | Washington | DC | 20001

Cohen, Bart

From: Republican Jewish Coalition [mail@rjchq.org]
Sent: Friday, December 23, 2005 1:15 PM
To: Cohen, Bart
Subject: RJC Praised in Wall Street Journal today

RJC Praised in Wall Street Journal today

December 23, 2005

Responding to the RJC's national advertising campaign, Lawrence Kaplan, Editor of *The New Republic*, charges that the Reform Movement has forgotten what's "good for the Jews." And he writes, "The task of halting the Union's foray into politics has fallen mostly to the Republican Jewish Coalition..."

**AMERICAN JEWIS
Whose Jews?**

The prophets have spoken, and it is time to retreat from Babylon. Or so says the Union for Reform Judaism, speaking for the largest branch of American Judaism. The Union's "prophetic mission and God's call to us to be a 'light to the nations'" has, in its own telling, compelled it to demand "a clear exit strategy with specific goals for troop withdrawal" from Iraq.

The task of halting the Union's foray into politics has fallen mostly to the Republican Jewish Coalition, which, unlike the Union, bills itself for what it is: a partisan organization. As a result of all this, President Bush, already bogged down in Iraq's sectarian divisions, finds himself ensnared in a religious feud right here at home. In a major address on Iraq last week, the president was reduced to playing the Israel card, pleading with its supporters to acknowledge that "Israel's long-term survival depends upon the spread of democracy in the Middle East."

In one sense at least, the Union's outburst amounts to something more than the everyday pollution of public discourse. Recall that on the eve of the invasion of Iraq, the claim that the Jewish state and its American co-religionists were manufacturing war had become canonical in certain quarters. From the right, Robert Novak described the conflict as "Sharon's war," while from the opposite end of the spectrum, *The Nation* reported that the war's promoters subscribed to "articles of faith that effectively hold there is no differences between U.S. and Israeli national security interests."

Never mind that Israeli officials were lukewarm about the war from the outset, being far more concerned with the threat from Iran. Never mind, too, that American Jews were more likely to be among the war's most vocal opponents than among its boosters. (A Yeshiva University poll earlier this year found that two-thirds of American Jews disapprove of the U.S. enterprise in Iraq). The

Union's stand demolishes the canard that American Jews cannot distinguish between Israel's interests and their own.

Judging by the Union's vocal opposition to the war, the problem, if anything, appears to be the reverse: What is "good for the Jews" seems to concern the organization less than what is good for American liberalism. A premature withdrawal from Iraq would be devastating to the cause of the Jewish state. That observation does not reflect the motive for having gone to war, but simply the outcome of abandoning a fellow democracy without condition and regardless of consequence - and the obvious consequence would be Iraq's transformation into a den of terror. None of this seems to have made an impression on the reform Jewish organization.

The Union, which "came to these views based on Jewish teachings on war" and likens itself to "the rabbis of the Talmud", has no claim to heightened moral awareness. Not only because it twists the words of those very rabbis (as with any religious text, the Talmud offers ammunition to multiple points of view, invoked to defend everything from Israel's invasion of Lebanon to the "axis of evil" formulation). And not only because the Union's intrusion into the public square comes from an organization that claims to be in the midst of an "ongoing defense of the wall of separation between church and state." No, the real problem is that the Union grounds its arguments squarely in the traditions of secular humanism, and then purposefully conflates them with the traditions of religious Judaism.

True, the worldly admonition tikkun olam - repair the world - is one of Judaism's signatures. But the Union isn't about repairing the world. Is it really necessary, after all, to point out that its insistence on a U.S. withdrawal does nothing to further the Union's call to "support the democratically elected Iraqi government"? Or that the "international community" that it invokes at every turn would sooner the Union's members no longer existed? Or that the biblical injunction to "not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor," one among many kernels of Jewish law the Union ostentatiously cites in defense of its Iraq position, means not abandoning Iraq to its fate?

Apparently so, because for all its confusions, the Union really does amount to an authentic expression of the political inclinations that define American Judaism today. As evinced by the Union's position on Iraq, those inclinations defy easy logic. The American Jewish community's attachment to the political left goes beyond obstinacy - to the point of running counter to the very requirements of that same community. Hence, when asked to choose between the security of Jews, on the one hand, and clichés about social equality and inadequate domestic expenditures, on the other, Reform Jewish leaders have put what they presume to be the secular equivalent of Judaism above the interests of Judaism itself. The Union of Reform Judaism stands for many causes. It's no longer so clear that Jews count among them.

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RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE NOMINATION OF JUDGE SAMUEL ALITO, JR. TO THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE NOMINATION OF JUDGE SAMUEL ALITO JR. TO THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

Submitted by the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism to the 68th Union for Reform Judaism General Assembly

Passed – Houston, November 2005

POSITION SUMMARY

Based on Judge Alito's extensive public record before us as outlined in the background of this Resolution, the Commission on Social Action is recommending that the Biennial oppose Judge Alito's nomination to the Supreme Court of the United States. It does so concerned that on issues of core value to our Movement his assertively conservative approach to the law will shift the narrowly divided Supreme Court, and restrict constitutional and statutory protections regarding privacy, reproductive choice, women's rights, civil rights, and the separation of church and state. The CSA also has recommended that although Judge Alito's public record is extensive, consistent and unlikely to change in the hearings, the Union review this decision after the hearings in accordance with the procedure outlined in its 2002 Resolution on Judicial Nominations.

BACKGROUND

In 2002 the Union for Reform Judaism adopted a policy statement, "Resolution on Judicial, Executive Branch, and Independent Agency Nominations," to guide its deliberations when it considers the possibility of opposing a specific nominee for the federal judiciary. The resolution outlines the following considerations, one or more of which might provide grounds for opposition to a nominee:

- A. The nominee lacks the competence, professional qualifications, or ethical standards to serve in the position to which he or she is nominated;
- B. A nominee for a judicial position has demonstrated a pattern of disregard for generally accepted principles of jurisprudence or a nominee for an executive branch or independent agency appointment has a demonstrated record of opposition to the policies that he or she would be responsible to administer;
- C. The nominee has a record of bigoted, racist or anti-Semitic activity;
- D. The nominee has emerged as a major and influential ideologue on one or more issues of core concern to the Reform Movement and the appointment would likely contribute significantly to reshaping American jurisprudence or policy in a direction that would jeopardize those core values;
- E. The nomination has engendered a national debate on one or more issues of core concern

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to the Reform Movement so that the outcome of the confirmation or nomination is likely to be perceived as a referendum on that issue and will have significant implications beyond the individual nomination; and

F. The nominee's confirmation would shift the ideological or policy balance of a particular court or independent agency on matters of core concern to the Reform Movement.

After carefully applying the considerations set forth in that statement, the Commission on Social Action is recommending opposition to the nomination of Judge Samuel Alito to serve as Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. While there is a general consensus that he is a person of the highest levels of intelligence, competence, integrity, and judicial temperament, and that considerations A-C do not apply; based on considerations D, E, and F the CSA recommends opposition for the following reasons (the quotes are from the 2002 URJ policy statement):

- Judge Alito's elevation to the Supreme Court "would threaten protection of the most fundamental rights which our Movement supports including, but not limited to, reproductive freedom, the separation between church and state, protection of civil rights and civil liberties, and protection of the environment;"
- On choice, women's rights, civil rights, and the scope of federal power particularly as it relates to civil rights and environmental protection, Judge Alito's nomination "has engendered a national debate on one or more issues of core concern to the Reform Movement so that the outcome of the nomination is likely to be perceived as a referendum on that issue and will have significant implications beyond the individual nomination;"
- Based on his opinions (often dissents on our core issues and values) in which he often differed from the views of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor (who was so often the moderate "swing vote" on a closely divided Supreme Court), Judge Alito's elevation "would shift the ideological balance of the Supreme Court on matters of core concern to the Reform Movement;" and
- Judge Alito's elevation to the Supreme Court "would likely contribute significantly to reshaping American jurisprudence in a direction that would jeopardize those core values."

Some hold that we should wait until after the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings, scheduled to begin on January 9, 2006, before finalizing our policy position. While this argument holds merit, the Union should voice its opposition now because:

- It is an extraordinary confluence of circumstance that brings the Reform Movement's highest decision making body together at a time that this decision can be made. Given this chance, it would be wrong to lose this opportunity to put such a decision before our largest, most diverse, most democratic body;
- Unlike the recent nominations of Judge Roberts and Ms. Miers, when our Movement chose to wait for the hearings before making a policy decision because their public records were so sparse, Judge Alito has a fifteen year record as a Circuit Court Judge revealing his judicial philosophy and substantive legal views, views that categorize him among the more conservative voices in American jurisprudence today;
- As his record is so expansive and consistent, it is far less likely that any new information will be presented during the hearings process that would alter our position. In the past, the Union has acted on several nominations where a nominee's record was well established and the timing of a board meeting preceded hearings—with the clear assumption that if the hearings substantively changed the view of the candidate the decision would be revisited. (In none of these cases did the hearings have that effect); and

- Much of the political dynamic that will shape the outcome of this nomination process will happen before the hearings in January 2006, and if our Movement believes it is helpful to act in order to maintain judicial protections of our basic rights, we can do so most effectively now.

There is recognition, however, that there should be an opportunity for Union leadership to review this decision after the hearings. The CSA has recommended such a review which would be implemented by a process the URJ Board established in 1974 and reaffirmed in its 2002 Resolution on Judicial, Executive Branch, and Independent Agency Nominations:

A. If time permits, recommendations to oppose a nominee will be taken to the UAHC [URJ] Board or its Executive Committee for decision.

B. If time does not permit, recommendations to oppose a nominee will be submitted to a review committee, which will include, in accordance with the UAHC [URJ] board resolution of June 1974, all members of the CSA Executive Committee who serve on the UAHC [URJ] Board and such other members as the Chair of the UAHC [URJ] may choose. The review committee is to make a recommendation to the Chair and President of the UAHC [URJ] who will decide the matter.

THEREFORE, the Union for Reform Judaism resolves to:

Oppose Judge Alito's nomination as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States now, based on his extensive record, but have the Union review that decision at the end of the hearings, with the understanding that if disclosures in the hearings do not reflect substantial changes, the Union will remain in opposition to his nomination.

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Cohen, Bart

From: L. Howard Wizig [wizig@kc.rr.com]
Sent: Wednesday, December 14, 2005 12:39 PM
To: Cohen, Bart
Subject: Letter to Matt Brooks

Bart,

Here is the letter to Matt Brooks that I referenced in my earlier email.

Best,
 Howard

An Open Letter to Matt Brooks: Questions About Your Ad in Today's *New York Times*

To: Matt Brooks, Executive Director, Republican Jewish Coalition
From: Rabbi David Saperstein, Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
Cc: Interested Friends, Colleagues, Journalists

Your provocative full-page ad in today's New York Times has been sitting on my desk for a few hours now. One of our goals in passing a resolution at our Biennial was to stimulate a debate on the war within the American Jewish community. We are pleased to see that debate beginning. It's unfortunate the RJC's contribution to that debate is misleading and ignores the crucial issues facing our nation today which are raised in our resolution.

More than anything else, Matt, I'm confused by the ad. So I thought it would be helpful to pose a few of my questions directly to you:

1. Why did you not refer to, quote from, or discuss a single concern about U.S. Iraq policy addressed by the resolution?

Although it would not be clear to readers from your ad, you actually never even refer to what the resolution actually says; you refer instead only to one line from a press statement. Does that advance the public discourse on the vital issues our nation faces? We are proud of the thoughtful positions taken by our Movement. In contrast to the ad, our resolution goes into great depth in discussing these issues, with the background section fairly giving arguments from both supporters and critics of the President's policies.

2. From where, in our resolution or statements, do you get the idea that the Union for Reform Judaism does not believe that "Freedom is Worth Fighting For?"

Does the RJC believe that all those who have expressed doubts about the execution of the war and urged the Administration to come forward with a clear exit strategy – including Senator John Warner (R-VA), Representative John Murtha (D-PA), and former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, among many others – do not believe that "Freedom is worth fighting for?"

Many of the leaders of our Movement who voted for this resolution fought and bled in

American wars to preserve our freedoms. What right do you have to besmirch their commitment, or our Movement's, to America or the values for which it stands?

3. How do you justify the suggestion in your ad that, in contrast to you, we do not "stand behind our troops and their mission of creating a safe, democratic Iraq?"

Our resolution is quite clear on our support for the service men and women of this battle. The resolution reads, in part, that we:

"commend our service women and men (and their families) who have answered duty's call and served our nation honorably, often with valor and distinction, and who have earned our respect and gratitude and that of the American people, and support generous benefits for them... (both in Iraq and at home, thus honoring those who serve our nation and fulfilling our commitments to them;) and specifically to (a) Demand that our service men and women receive appropriate flak jackets, armor and other equipment to afford them maximum protection as they carry out their mission; and (b) Demand that adequate funds be made available... to ensure that United States military personnel wounded in connection with the Iraq war receive the highest quality medical care available and that they and their families are afforded the necessary support (including counseling) to cope with their injuries...;"

4. Your ad suggests that you think most American Jews would agree with your view (and disagree with ours). What evidence do you have for that?

Polls clearly show there is widespread dissatisfaction with the Administration's conduct of this war. There are two such polls we know of which sampled American Jewish opinion on the war. An American Jewish Committee Survey in September 2004, found that 66% of American Jews "disapprove of how the president is handling the war," and 30 percent approve. A poll done for Yeshiva University by Marttila Communications in March 2005 found that 62% of American Jews, and 70% of Reform Jews, feel that "the United States is less secure as a result of the war in Iraq." Since that time, general public opinion polls have found increasing disapproval of the war, and there is no reason to think the Jewish community numbers – which already were overwhelmingly critical of the war in September 2004 -- would not show similar significant increases.

5. How representative are those who signed your ad in contrast to those who voted on our resolution?

The Union's Resolution was voted on by over 2,000 voting delegates (from among the over 4,000 participants) at our Biennial General Assembly. It was distributed to all congregations and delegates in advance, and was the subject of debate both in advance of the Biennial and at the Biennial itself. [The convention itself was coincidentally in Texas, drawing a higher percentage of our delegates from more conservative areas of the country. Nonetheless,] the resolution, to our surprise, passed by a nearly 90% vote. We acknowledge, of course, that not every Reform Jew agrees with this policy (or about anything else!) but the General Assembly is among the largest grassroots bodies in the American Jewish world today.

6. Your ad leaves the impression (although in fairness, it does not say so explicitly) that the signatories are members of Union-affiliated congregations. To what extent is that true?

While some are members of our synagogues, there certainly appear to be a number of signatories who have no connection at all with the Reform Jewish Movement.

The Administration has launched a major campaign to resell the American people on the war, but we still see no evidence of a thoughtful plan for moving forward from here. If our resolution and the response to it help foster healthy discussion on how to do so, we would be delighted, and we urge the RJC to contribute to that discourse more seriously and substantively than your \$150K plus ad campaign will do.

That RJC office holders and loyalists will defend the policies espoused by their party's leader (but not by a growing number of Republican members of Congress who have been questioning U.S. policy) is not surprising. What IS surprising is that after a full, fair and democratic (with a small d) process, an overwhelming consensus emerged in our Movement on one of the most painful and controversial issues of our day. You cannot diminish the power of that reality with misleading ads.

I look forward to your response.

###

The **Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism** is the Washington office of the **Union for Reform Judaism**, whose more than **900 congregations** across North America encompass **1.5 million Reform Jews**, and the **Central Conference of American Rabbis**, whose membership includes more than **1800 Reform rabbis**.

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Cohen, Bart

From: Cohen, Bart
Sent: Tuesday, January 03, 2006 10:23 AM
To: 'rabbi@bnaijehudah.org'
Cc: 'RJC@RJCHG.org'; 'wizig@kc.rr.com'; 'ldfry@fry-wagner.com'
Subject: CBJ core values

Dear rabbi:

Since hearing your sermon of 12/23 I have been mulling over in my mind whether and how to respond, finally concluding that the sermon was intended to stimulate thought and that you might be disappointed when it appeared that your message had fallen on deaf ears. How to respond required more thought.

It was obvious that you devoted considerable time to the sermon preparation and the number of subjects touched upon could provide topics for numerous sermons. Time did not allow for full development of any specific subject. Hopefully on other settings those subjects can be more fully explored. So what follows is to let you know that someone was listening and had reactions to what you said.

You mentioned without elaboration that you did not entirely agree with the Resolutions on Iraq and Alito nor did you approve the procedure utilized by URJ in obtaining their adoption. Since you did not detail how you disapproved I cannot disagree with you but will express my disagreement with URJ.

To the substance of the Resolutions:

Iraq. The statement adopted by the URJ most closely resembles the position of Howard Dean, approved by only three members of the House of Representatives. Recently Congresswoman Pelosi, the Democrat minority leader, when asked where she stood in relation to Howard Dean's position stated that this issue is a matter of conscience for all members of her party and that each member would decide for him/herself where she stood on if, when and how to withdraw from Iraq.

For the URJ, purporting to speak on behalf of its membership, by adopting a resolution directing our government that it must withdraw from Iraq and directing the withdrawal to commence immediately after December 15 is a brazen intrusion into the decision making process of our government and upon the individual conscience of each Reform Jew. While it might have been a mistake to enter Iraq there are many good reasons for delaying troop withdrawal now that our troops are there.

Alito. The resolution states that URJ opposes his appointment to the Supreme Court because he does not support core values of URJ. No examples were given of his opposition to those core values. Legal scholars are thoroughly examining his papers and decisions issued during his more than 20 years of public life seeking to

discern a predisposition, trend or bias on issues likely to be presented to the Supreme Court in order to publicize them and prepare questions for the Judiciary Committee. To date I have heard numerous legal scholars comment on his statements but no one has definitively discerned how he will decide any specific case. Hearings examining him have not been held nor has the URJ leadership or membership conducted a comprehensive review of his legal writings. Yet the URJ has gone on record opposing his appointment. It appears to me that URJ has committed a major violation of traditional Jewish values by declaring his guilt before giving him a hearing.

Procedurally the presentation and adoption of these resolutions were badly flawed. At least the Iraq resolution was included on the URJ website for consideration at the annual meeting. I am not aware that the Alito resolution was made known publicly prior to the meeting. The Iraq resolution was endorsed by several congregations while the Alito resolution emanated solely from Rabbi Saferstein's organization. Congregations were not encouraged to debate, in advance, these resolutions nor to adopt positions on them. Delegates were expected to vote on resolutions without being presented an opportunity to examine alternative position statements on these issues. Voice votes were used rather than written ballots and yet Rabbi Yoffie claimed they had the support of 90% of the delegates. Traditional Jewish values are best served when issues are discussed openly, fairly and thoroughly, decisions rendered after deliberation--that is due process. URJ in adopting and publicizing these resolutions has corrupted basic Jewish values.

Rabbi Yoffie was quoted in the Chronicle as wanting to stimulate debate on the war within the Jewish community. Rabbi Yoffie's reasoning is disingenuous and hypocritical since he led the URJ to adopt these resolutions prior to having them debated by URJ congregations.. Debating at the local level after the national organization has already spoken is like locking the barn door after the horses have escaped. The damage to the Reform Jewish movement has already been done. Rabbis Yoffie and Saferstein have forgotten that the URJ derives its authority from its member congregations and their membership; rather they have chosen to treat those congregations and their membership in an utterly autocratic manner--they seem to be on an ego trip greatly impressed with the power of their positions. So their actions have not precipitated a debate on the issues. Instead the debate centers on the URJ itself, its leadership, mission and its foray into partisan politics.

In contrast to the URJ leaders your sermon recognized the importance of due process, that congregations as an organization can only speak on nonreligious issues when authorized by its members and the initiative for any such position must come from the membership. As an individual you can express any opinion you want from the pulpit or elsewhere but when speaking on behalf of the congregation then appropriate procedure must be used in advance for such position. You were very specific as to the procedure you believe should be utilized and, although I might refine your suggestions, I compliment you for recognizing the importance of

due process. The ends do not justify the means. Regardless of the merit of the goals to be achieved, they do not justify the use of any methods for their attainment.

However your use of "social" and "political" almost interchangeably and as though the concept of "political" follows naturally after "social" fails to consider that they are totally different concepts. When you look in the dictionary you will find that social refers to the community and the people in the community while political refers to matters relating to government. While there may be social issues on which our congregation may want to take a position I strongly believe that it is wrong for our congregation or in fact any religious organization to adopt positions on political issues.

If we truly believe that there should be a wall between church and state then it is just as wrong for the church to try to influence the decisions of government as it is for government to try to influence the decisions of religious bodies. Religious organizations are tax exempt and as such are not to engage in political activities. How would URJ react if IRS undertook to challenge its tax exempt status because URJ was opposing government policies? Or how would URJ react if grants of public money went to religious organizations supporting government policies while withholding grants from those organizations opposed to government policies? The URJ is placing our congregation on a ride on a slippery slope. Our congregation should not permit itself to join that ride by adopting positions on political issues. We should encourage our members to get actively involved in the political process and to make their views known through the many avenues available for free expression of political opinion but the synagogue is not an avenue for political expression.

Both you and URJ justify forays in to the political arena on the basis of core values. For the URJ those core values were stated as being "privacy, reproductive choice, civil right and the separation of church and state" and "reproductive freedom, separation of church and state, protection of civil rights and civil liberties, protection of the environment". I do not know whether those so-called core values have been reduced to writing, adopted by member congregations and approved by URJ--if so I would like to read the text of each core value. Each such value presents certain complications and cannot be so simply stated, within each such statements various questions need to be addressed. I am not aware that our congregation has adopted any set of core values and if such adoption occurred I would like to review the text.

It appears to me that core values of a religious organization should relate to religious and theological matters. Concern for social or secular issues can be expressed but involvement in political issues must be avoided.

What I would like to see is more attention given to education. Not only religious education but education that assists the members in making the difficult decisions associated, for example, with life and death and the role of the individual in society

and as a member of a synagogue. The simplistic list of core values stated by URJ consist of very difficult practical concepts about which we al would benefit by hearing the views of our religious tradition, learned rabbis and other professionals as well as lay people in our own religious community. We may find that our real core values are not at all as represented by the URJ.



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due process. The ends do not justify the means. Regardless of the merit of the goals to be achieved, they do not justify the use of any methods for their attainment.

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Both you and URJ justify forays in to the political arena on the basis of core values. For the URJ those core values were stated as being "privacy, reproductive choice, civil right and the separation of church and state" and "reproductive freedom, separation of church and state, protection of civil rights and civil liberties, protection of the environment". I do not know whether those so-called core values have been reduced to writing, adopted by member congregations and approved by URJ--if so I would like to read the text of each core value. Each such value presents certain complications and cannot be so simply stated, within each such statements various questions need to be addressed. I am not aware that our congregation has adopted any set of core values and if such adoption occurred I would like to review the text.

It appears to me that core values of a religious organization should relate to religious and theological matters. Concern for social or secular issues can be expressed but involvement in political issues must be avoided.

What I would like to see is more attention given to education. Not only religious education but education that assists the members in making the difficult decisions associated, for example, with life and death and the role of the individual in society

and as a member of a synagogue. The simplistic list of core values stated by URJ consist of very difficult practical concepts about which we al would benefit by hearing the views of our religious tradition, learned rabbis and other professionals as well as lay people in our own religious community. We may find that our real core values are not at all as represented by the URJ.



Cohen, Bart

From: Larry Fry [ldfry@fry-wagner.com]
Sent: Monday, December 19, 2005 2:05 PM
To: rabbi@bnaijehudah.org
Subject: FW: Rabbi Gellman Challenges Reform Movement on Iraq

Dear Art,

Having read several different sources regarding the vote taken at the URJ convention in Houston, I am deeply concerned that movement should have even take a vote on such a emotionally difficult issue like the war in Iraq. As a member of B'nai Jehudah and a Reform Jew, I know that views are very different among each one of us. If fact my explanation of being a reform Jew is that my faith comes from my heart.

I know that you mentioned on Friday evening that you intend to take up the topic of Judaism and Politics in a future sermon, that's a interesting notion as I have noticed since your arrival in KC that you have taken a very balanced view from the pulpit and have never pushed any political view towards your congregants.

I appreciate that very much as my own personal views guide me more towards the center with some bias to the right.

Since B'nai Jehudah contributes financially to the operation of URJ its appropriate for me me to voice my disappointment with the recent vote and the diatribe now taking place in the media regarding the Historic vote.

Attached is a copy of Rabbi Marc Gellman's view of what he calls

"Union of Reform Judaism's vote to oppose the war in Iraq was a mistake and embarrassment for my movement"

Rabbi Gellman's points are right on target. **"Never again anyone"**.

George Bush did what was right for future generations of Americans and the world as a whole. Saddam Hussein was a tyrant that sooner or later needed to be dealt with and it was for the better of mankind, If not now when!.

George Bush freed the slaves of Iraq much like Moses lead the Jews out of Egypt.

know that the URJ does a lot of good things for promoting American Jewry, but they need to make a policy to keep politics out of the policies of the URJ or face members of the reform movement that feel that their portion of their contribution made to B'nai Jehudah need to be withheld from the URJ as they do not represent my personal views.

Best Regards,

Larry Fry

-----Original Message-----

From: Matt Brooks - RJC [mailto:mail@rjchq.org]
Sent: M nday, December 19, 2005 10:19 AM

Cohen, Bart

From: Matt Brooks - RJC [mailto:mail@rjchq.org]
Sent: Wednesday, December 14, 2005 5:10 PM
To: Cohen, Bart
Subject: RJC Ad Generates Major Press Attention

Help us continue this campaign!

December 13, 2005

Dear RJC Members and Friends:

The Republican Jewish Coalition's national ad campaign is generating major media coverage and sparking a serious debate on the war in Iraq among leaders and members of the Reform movement and throughout the Jewish community.

The ad appeared in Tuesday's *New York Times* and will run in the *Washington Post* and Jewish newspapers around the country later this week.

The *Washington Post* commented on the ad Tuesday in an article by political writer Thomas Edsall.

The *New York Sun* noted our ad in a significant article Wednesday entitled "Reform Judaism's Anti-War Letter to Bush Ignites Furor." (The letter, which presented the President with the URJ resolution against the war in Iraq, caused controversy of its own.)

And Senator Norm Coleman, the Jewish Republican Senator from Minnesota, offered a statement on the floor of the Senate today praising the RJC ad and its message of support for our troops and our President.

We are engaging the Jewish community in an important debate. **But we cannot do it without your support.** We invite you to participate in this effort by:

- 1) **Writing to Rabbi Yoffie at the Union of Reform Judaism** and letting him know that he does not speak for you on the war in Iraq and the war on terror. **Add your voice to the hundreds of people who have already made their views known to the URJ; send your message to Rabbi Yoffie via email at PresURJ@URJ.ORG ;**
- 2) **Contributing to the RJC.** Your generous contribution to the Republican Jewish Coalition will support this very expensive and extensive ad campaign, as well as our continuing efforts to reach out to the American Jewish community on a variety of vital issues. **Click here to contribute via our secure webpage.**

No other organization brings our point of view into the key public policy debates of our time. **We need your help to make our voice heard.**

If you have already responded to our call, thank you! Your support makes our innovative, thought-provoking, and effective outreach possible. **If you have not yet made a contribution to support this campaign and other RJC efforts, please give generously today!**

Read our press release and view the ad here

Matt Brooks
Republican Jewish Coalition

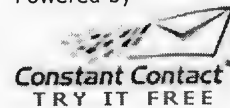
email: mail@rjchq.org
web: <http://www.rjchq.org>

Forward email

SafeUnsubscribe™

This email was sent to bcohen@blackwellsanders.com, by mail@rjchq.org
Update Profile/Email Address | Instant removal with SafeUnsubscribe™ | Privacy Policy.

Powered by



Republican Jewish Coalition | 50 F Street, NW | Suite 100 | Washington | DC | 20001



Cohen, Bart

From: L. Howard Wizig [wizig@kc.rr.com]
Sent: Wednesday, December 14, 2005 12:39 PM
To: Cohen, Bart
Subject: FW: Iraq War Resolution: An Update

Bart,

Below are the letters to the President and the Q & A letter from Robert Heller (Chairman of URJ). Original PDFs can be found at <http://urj.org/worldconflict/iraq/>. Note in the Q&A that a statement is made that "The Alito and Iraq resolutions passed overwhelmingly with an 85% - 90% vote." In a separate email that I will forward in a moment, the letter to Matt Brooks says that the Iraq resolution "passed by a nearly 90% vote".

Interestingly, it is my recollection (and confirmed by others in the meeting) that there was not a handcount on the Alito resolution (I wasn't there for the Iraq resolution). That said, it was clear that it passed by a majority...but to say 85-90% is clearly "false precision". Similarly, I checked with people who were present for the Iraq resolution, and they confirmed that there was not a handcount on that vote. On the votes that I attended, there was no counting of ballots...therefore it is possible that some who voted were not actually delegates.

Best,
Howard

-----Original Message-----

Subject: Iraq War Resolution: An Update



December 13, 2005
12 Kislev 5766

Dear Friends,

It was wonderful to be with so many of you at our 68th Biennial Convention in Houston last month. Over 4,000 people participated in workshops and worship over the course of the convention. In addition, as you know, we passed a number of important new resolutions at the biennial. We are already starting to take action based on the new resolutions by, for example, working actively to support Senator John McCain (R-AZ) in his effort to make clear that the United States will not use torture in any circumstances.

To keep you informed of our actions, I have attached a copy of the letter we are sending today to President Bush based on the Iraq resolution. I hope you will read it carefully, and share it with your congregation. (In a slightly different form, we are also submitting the letter as an "op-ed" article to the Jewish newspapers.)

For obvious reasons, the resolutions on Iraq and on the nomination of Samuel Alito to the U.S. Supreme Court, which were approved by overwhelming majorities, were a source of debate at the Biennial and have continued to draw significant media attention and public discussion. It has also come to our attention that the Republican Jewish Committee (RJC) is taking out newspaper ads (including a full-page in today's *New York Times*) criticizing the Biennial's decision. As a result, we have received inquiries about how the Union arrives at its policy positions.

To assist you in responding to any questions you may receive, we have prepared the following "Q & A" to help explain the resolution process:

Question: Why is the Union taking sides in a “political” debate? Is it appropriate for the Union to take positions on controversial issues?

Answer: Our prophetic mission and God's call to us to be a “light to the nations” compel us to speak out on the great moral and policy issues of our time. That was true at the height of the Civil Rights struggle, it was true in our struggle for Soviet Jewry, and it has been true in our ongoing defense of the wall of separation between church and state, of women's rights, environmental protections, and Israel's security and it remains true today as we confront new and urgent moral issues. There is no such thing as “religion,” particularly Judaism, in the abstract. As the prophets taught us, and as the Torah makes plain again and again, we must apply the ethical insights of our tradition to the real problems of our society. It should be noted that every stream of American Jewry, the Catholic Church, almost every Christian denomination and most smaller religious faith groups regularly speak out on issues.

Question: How are positions articulated by Reform Movement leaders developed?

Answer: When Rabbi Yoffie, Rabbi Saperstein or other Reform Movement leaders speak to an issue on its behalf, their comments are based on decisions made in several ways:

- By the Union's Biennial General Assembly with over two thousand voting delegates (which is among the largest and most representative decision-making bodies in contemporary Jewish life) to which every congregation in good standing is invited – and encouraged – to send delegates; and/or
- By the Union Board consisting of over 250 leaders, many of whom themselves are current or past local leaders from more than a hundred of our synagogues, and/or
- By the Union Board's executive committee consisting of 83 such leaders; or
- By the plenum of the CCAR involving hundreds of rabbis directly voting on such issues (this section applies to the Religious Action Center that is a joint instrumentality of the Union for Reform Judaism and the Central Conference of American Rabbis.)

Question: How are decisions made at the Biennial itself?

Answer: First, it is important to note that every congregation has the right to bring a resolution to the floor of the Biennial. Indeed, the resolution on Iraq initially came from several congregations. Resolutions can also come from Committees of the Union or Joint Commissions of the URJ/CCAR. In the end, the Iraq resolution was joined by the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism (CSA) (100 leaders representing every arm and affiliate) and several congregations. Resolutions are then reviewed, changed and adopted (or sent without recommendation) by the URJ Resolutions Committee, a diverse committee of 33 leaders. The Alito resolution came from the CSA. In both the Iraq and Alito cases the Resolutions Committee reviewed the resolutions and overwhelmingly approved them and sent them on to the Biennial.

Question: How representative of the Movement were those voting at the Biennial?

Answer: At the Houston Biennial there were more than 2000 voting delegates from over 500 congregations, with most of them attending the vote on the resolutions, with floor debates on both resolutions. The Alito and Iraq resolutions passed overwhelmingly with an 85% - 90% vote.

Question: What does it mean when the Union adopts a position? Is it binding on congregations or individuals?

Answer: Decisions of the Biennial or the Board bind the leadership of the Movement, but they do not bind anyone else. Congregants and congregations are, of course, free to hold and express divergent views; indeed we welcome differing opinions and vigorous debate, and we invite those who do not agree to bring their ideas to Movement forums.

Question: Does the Union claim to represent the views of every congregant?

Answer: We believe our processes ensure that our resolutions reflect a clear consensus within the Movement. But even so, we do not hold ourselves out as speaking for *all* Reform Jews, synagogues or rabbis any more than any other denomination, Jewish, Christian or otherwise, pretends to speak for all of its parishioners. Certainly anyone who has ever attended a Temple

board meeting knows that our congregants hold a variety of views on almost everything!

Question: What do we know about American Jewish public opinion on the war?

Answer: Recent polls show there is widespread dissatisfaction. There are two polls we know of which sampled American Jewish opinion on the war. An American Jewish Committee Survey from September 2004, found that 66% of American Jews "disapprove of how the president is handling the war," and 30 percent approve. The AJCommittee press release notes that this is "a significant shift since last December, when an AJC poll found 54 percent disapproving and 43 percent approving." A poll done for Yeshiva University by Marttila Communications in March 2005 found that nearly 2/3's (62%) of American Jews, and 70% of Reform Jews, feel that "the United States is less secure as a result of the war in Iraq." Since that time, general public opinion polls have found increasing disapproval of the war, and there is no reason to think the Jewish community numbers – which already were overwhelmingly critical of the war in September 2004 -- would not show similar significant increases.

Question: What was the internal process on the Iraq and Alito resolutions?

Answer: Both resolutions came up after the initial resolutions proposed for consideration at the Biennial had already been circulated to congregations. Judge Alito was not nominated until October 31 and we received a draft resolution on Iraq from interested congregations that month as well. Recognizing that the war in Iraq and the Alito nomination are sensitive topics, the Union leadership decided to bring them directly to the Biennial, our most representative body, rather than limit participation in the decision-making to the Board of Trustees. Both resolutions were the subject of thorough background memoranda outlining the positions of those on all sides of the issues. Those memoranda, and the resolutions themselves, were distributed in advance, and were the subject of discussion within the Movement before the Houston Biennial, as well as in Houston. They were, as described above, approved by the CSA and the Resolutions Committee. Further, because of the timing, both resolutions required a "supermajority" vote for passage ensuring they represented a consensus. (Again, both passed overwhelmingly.)

* * *

Like the rabbis of the Talmud, who recorded both majority and minority views, we cherish diversity of opinion and structure our deliberations to ensure that diverse views are heard. Hence we began the Alito debate by hearing from one of his former law clerks who supported the nomination and urged that the Biennial Assembly not oppose it, as well as from an opponent of the nomination, and we extended time for debate to ensure every opportunity was given for minority views to be heard. It should be noted that, in the end, while the Talmud cherished and recorded varied opinions, the different views did not stop them from reaching a decision based on the majority of the sages. But that majority view, while the "official" ruling, did not make the minority any less Jewish or less moral. This is a good model for all Jewish organizations and reflects how we approach all our policy decisions.

Robert Heller
Chairman
Union for Reform Judaism

December 13, 2005 – By Fax

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C.

Mr. President:

As you may know, at our recent Biennial General Assembly the Union for Reform Judaism – the synagogue arm of the nation's largest Jewish denomination – adopted a series of new policy statements. Our statement on the Iraq War has received considerable media attention, so we thought it important to write you directly to lay out what our resolution said. (The full text of the resolution is attached to this letter.)

The discussion and debate that preceded the consideration of the resolution on the Iraq War at our Biennial

Convention was intense, befitting the magnitude of the subject. The process involved various committees of our leadership. The resolution was drafted and redrafted, each clause considered, reconsidered and revised, every nuance scrutinized again and again until the very eve of the convention. In the end, the resolution – the first by any major Jewish organization (and among the first by any American religious movement) to explicitly speak to our nation's "failures before and during the war" and to call for "a clear exit strategy with specific goals for troop withdrawal" – was overwhelmingly approved by the over 2,000 voting delegates (among nearly 5,000 participants) at our Biennial General Assembly.

Some have publicly criticized our Movement, first for speaking out on this issue at all and second for supposedly suggesting that we speak for each and every member of our congregations. We can not fulfill the responsibility of our prophetic tradition without addressing the great moral issues of our day – every major faith group and denomination does so. And none speaks for all their members, or pretends to do so. They speak for the decision-making bodies of their faith groups, which in our case, culminates, as it did here, with our Biennial General Assembly -- one of the largest and most representative gatherings in American Jewish life.

Our delegates were painfully aware that they were being asked to deal with a major tragedy. Whatever the rationale for going to war, whatever the intelligence and planning failures, the cruel facts that have since unfolded and now obtain – specifically, the continuing costs of the war in blood and treasure, its discrediting of America in the international community and its contribution to the growth of terrorism – have brought us to the very brink of disaster. A rapidly growing number of Americans share that fear; none can celebrate it.

What, then, to do?

In answering that question, we are today a nation divided. Little wonder: We worry about the safety of our troops; we worry about the prospect of civil war in Iraq; we worry about the brutality of the insurgents and the attendant loss of American and Iraqi lives; we worry about the prospect of Iraq becoming what some mistakenly said it was before our invasion, a center for international terrorism; we worry about America's credibility in the world; and we worry about the evident lapses of our own institutions and agencies in adhering to international humanitarian norms in prosecuting the war, and none of these worries are given to easy solutions.

Yet our delegates achieved remarkable consensus on certain key points. And while no one would claim that Reform Jews across the country are of one view regarding the war (or, frankly, anything else!), we are confident (and public opinion polls bolster that confidence) that a substantial majority not only of Reform Jews but of American Jewry in general, broadly support the spirit and quite likely the letter of our statement.

What does our statement call for?

Respectfully but firmly, Mr. President, we want our leaders to tell us the truth, the whole of it, and we therefore call on your Administration to adopt a policy of transparency. With regard to troop withdrawal, we call not only for a clear exit strategy but also for specific goals for troop withdrawal, to commence after the completion of parliamentary elections scheduled for later this week and to then be continued in a way that maintains stability in Iraq and empowers Iraqi forces to provide for their national security.

We also call on Congress to provide more effective oversight of the war and to ensure that the financial burden of the war falls not just on the poor and on future generations but is shared equitably.

We came to these views based on Jewish teachings on war and our best judgments as citizens of the United States. In addition, but by no means as afterthoughts, our resolution commends our service women and men (and their families) and supports generous benefits for them, both in Iraq and at home; we call for the establishment of a bipartisan independent commission to determine the lessons learned from our strategic, intelligence, planning and implementation failures before and during the war; we condemn, in the strongest possible terms, violations of the Geneva Conventions and other applicable laws, including torture and abuse of prisoners and detainees in U.S. custody; and we condemn those who would use opposition to the war in Iraq as justification for anti-Israel efforts.

And perhaps most importantly, we call on our congregations across the nation to: provide a venue to address these issues, to advocate consistently on behalf of the principles set forth in the resolution, and to adopt respectful and meaningful methods of honoring the contribution of our military.

All this we say with sorrow, and with pride.

Dear Friends,

Page 5 of 5

Respectfully,

Robert M. Heller
Chairman of the Board

Rabbi Eric Yoffie
President



Cohen, Bart

From: Larry Fry [ldfry@fry-wagner.com]
Sent: Tuesday, January 03, 2006 11:29 AM
To: Cohen, Bart
Subject: RE: CBJ core values

Bart,

Thanks for copying me in on your email to the Rabbi. You articulated your points very well and I appreciate your voicing your views as many of us in the community were deeply disappointed with URJ's process and vote on these issues. I wish that I could have made the December 23rd service. Art and I did have a conversation prior to that date where he told me that he try's not to spew his political opinions from the pulpit.

Hope all is well with your family,

Larry

-----Original Message-----

From: Cohen, Bart [mailto:bcohen@Blackwellsanders.com]
Sent: Tuesday, January 03, 2006 10:23 AM
To: rabbi@bnaijehudah.org
Cc: RJC@RJCHG.org; wizig@kc.rr.com; ldfry@fry-wagner.com
Subject: CBJ core values

Dear rabbi:

Since hearing your sermon of 12/23 I have been mulling over in my mind whether and how to respond, finally concluding that the sermon was intended to stimulate thought and that you might be disappointed when it appeared that your message had fallen on deaf ears. How to respond required more thought.

It was obvious that you devoted considerable time to the sermon preparation and the number of subjects touched upon could provide topics for numerous sermons. Time did not allow for full development of any specific subject. Hopefully on other settings those subjects can be more fully explored. So what follows is to let you know that someone was listening and had reactions to what you said.

You mentioned without elaboration that you did not entirely agree with the Resolutions on Iraq and Alito nor did you approve the procedure utilized by URJ in obtaining their adoption. Since you did not detail how you disapproved I cannot disagree with you but will express my disagreement with URJ.

To the substance of the Resolutions:

Iraq. The statement adopted by the URJ most closely resembles the position of Howard Dean, approved by only three members of the House of Representatives. Recently Congresswoman Pelosi, the Democrat minority leader, when asked where she stood in relation to Howard Dean's position

stated that this issue is a matter of conscience for all members of her party and that each member would decide for him/herself where she stood on if, when and how to withdraw from Iraq.

For the URJ, purporting to speak on behalf of its membership, by adopting a resolution directing our government that it must withdraw from Iraq and directing the withdrawal to commence immediately after December 15 is a brazen intrusion into the decision making process of our government and upon the individual conscience of each Reform Jew. While it might have been a mistake to enter Iraq there are many good reasons for delaying troop withdrawal now that our troops are there.

Alito. The resolution states that URJ opposes his appointment to the Supreme Court because he does not support core values of URJ. No examples were given of his opposition to those core values. Legal scholars are thoroughly examining his papers and decisions issued during his more than 20 years of public life seeking to discern a predisposition, trend or bias on issues likely to be presented to the Supreme Court in order to publicize them and prepare questions for the Judiciary Committee. To date I have heard numerous legal scholars comment on his statements but no one has definitively discerned how he will decide any specific case. Hearings examining him have not been held nor has the URJ leadership or membership conducted a comprehensive review of his legal writings. Yet the URJ has gone on record opposing his appointment. It appears to me that URJ has committed a major violation of traditional Jewish values by declaring his guilt before giving him a hearing.

Procedurally the presentation and adoption of these resolutions were badly flawed. At least the Iraq resolution was included on the URJ website for consideration at the annual meeting. I am not aware that the Alito resolution was made known publicly prior to the meeting. The Iraq resolution was endorsed by several congregations while the Alito resolution emanated solely from Rabbi Saferstein's organization. Congregations were not encouraged to debate, in advance, these resolutions nor to adopt positions on them. Delegates were expected to vote on resolutions without being presented an opportunity to examine alternative position statements on these issues. Voice votes were used rather than written ballots and yet Rabbi Yoffie claimed they had the support of 90% of the delegates. Traditional Jewish values are best served when issues are discussed openly, fairly and thoroughly, decisions rendered after deliberation--that is due process. URJ in adopting and publicizing these resolutions has corrupted basic Jewish values.

Rabbi Yoffie was quoted in the Chronicle as wanting to stimulate debate on the war within the Jewish community. Rabbi Yoffie's reasoning is disingenuous and hypocritical since he led the URJ to adopt these resolutions prior to having them debated by URJ congregations.. Debating at the local level after the

national organization has already spoken is like locking the barn door after the horses have escaped. The damage to the Reform Jewish movement has already been done. Rabbis Yoffie and Saferstein have forgotten that the URJ derives its authority from its member congregations and their membership; rather they have chosen to treat those congregations and their membership in an utterly autocratic manner--they seem to be on an ego trip greatly impressed with the power of their positions. So their actions have not precipitated a debate on the issues. Instead the debate centers on the URJ itself, its leadership, mission and its foray into partisan politics.

In contrast to the URJ leaders your sermon recognized the importance of due process, that congregations as an organization can only speak on nonreligious issues when authorized by its members and the initiative for any such position must come from the membership. As an individual you can express any opinion you want from the pulpit or elsewhere but when speaking on behalf of the congregation then appropriate procedure must be used in advance for such position. You were very specific as to the procedure you believe should be utilized and, although I might refine your suggestions, I compliment you for recognizing the importance of due process. The ends do not justify the means. Regardless of the merit of the goals to be achieved, they do not justify the use of any methods for their attainment.

However your use of "social" and "political" almost interchangeably and as though the concept of "political" follows naturally after "social" fails to consider that they are totally different concepts. When you look in the dictionary you will find that social refers to the community and the people in the community while political refers to matters relating to government. While there may be social issues on which our congregation may want to take a position I strongly believe that it is wrong for our congregation or in fact any religious organization to adopt positions on political issues.

If we truly believe that there should be a wall between church and state then it is just as wrong for the church to try to influence the decisions of government as it is for government to try to influence the decisions of religious bodies. Religious organizations are tax exempt and as such are not to engage in political activities. How would URJ react if IRS undertook to challenge its tax exempt status because URJ was opposing government policies? Or how would URJ react if grants of public money went to religious organizations supporting government policies while withholding grants from those organizations opposed to government policies? The URJ is placing our congregation on a ride on a slippery slope. Our congregation should not permit itself to join that ride by adopting positions on political issues. We should encourage our members to get actively involved in the political process and to make their views known through the many avenues available for free expression of political opinion but the synagogue is not an avenue for political

expression.

Both you and URJ justify forays in to the political arena on the basis of core values. For the URJ those core values were stated as being "privacy, reproductive choice, civil right and the separation of church and state" and "reproductive freedom, separation of church and state, protection of civil rights and civil liberties, protection of the environment". I do not know whether those so-called core values have been reduced to writing, adopted by member congregations and approved by URJ--if so I would like to read the text of each core value. Each such value presents certain complications and cannot be so simply stated, within each such statements various questions need to be addressed. I am not aware that our congregation has adopted any set of core values and if such adoption occurred I would like to review the text.

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What I would like to see is more attention given to education. Not only religious education but education that assists the members in making the difficult decisions associated, for example, with life and death and the role of the individual in society and as a member of a synagogue. The simplistic list of core values stated by URJ consist of very difficult practical concepts about which we al would benefit by hearing the views of our religious tradition, learned rabbis and other professionals as well as lay people in our own religious community. We may find that our real core values are not at all as represented by the URJ.

To ensure compliance with requirements imposed by the IRS, we inform you that any U.S. tax advice contained in this communication (including any attachments) is not intended or written to be used, and cannot be used, for the purpose of (i) avoiding penalties under the Internal Revenue Code, or (ii) promoting, marketing or recommending to another party any matters addressed herein.