



American Jewish Committee
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The April 2008 edition of Capital Alert is dedicated to the memory of Congressman Tom Lantos. His singular contributions to this nation, to the defense of human rights, to the advancement of democratic values, to the security and prosperity of the state of Israel, and to the Jewish people will forever be remembered with gratitude.

*The American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906, gives voice to American Jewish community concerns, including its abiding commitments to Israel and to pluralism and inter-group understanding in the United States and around the world. In addition to its New York headquarters and Office of Government and International Affairs in Washington, AJC today operates 32 U.S. offices and 18 international posts. AJC's Office of Government and International Affairs represents AJC in its work with Congress, the Administration, foreign governments, and an array of ethnic, religious, and civic groups. The Office prepares **Capital Alert**, which reviews recent and anticipated developments that bear on AJC's public policy agenda in Washington.*

ISRAEL and ITS NEIGHBORS

As Israel marks its 60th anniversary, Congress is highlighting Israel's impressive accomplishments and reaffirming solidarity with Israel and the close bonds between our countries.

Only three years after the Holocaust, remnants of European Jewry joined the Jews already living in Palestine and Jewish refugees from across the Middle East to establish a Jewish homeland in a land to which Jews have been deeply tied—and where they have continuously resided—for more than 3,000 years. The rag-tag group successfully defended their fledgling state against attack by the armies of seven Arab states.

In the sixty years since, Israel's enemies have continuously tried to destroy it, rendering the country's accomplishments that much more impressive. Israel has never succumbed to a fortress mentality. Instead, in the words of the Congressional resolution, “the people of Israel have established a vibrant, pluralistic, democratic political system, including freedom of speech, association, and religion; a vigorously free press; free, fair and open elections; the rule of law; a fully independent judiciary; and other democratic principles and practices.”

Israelis have significantly advanced the frontiers of knowledge and produced eight Nobel Prize winners. They have turned a poor, arid land into a first-rate world economy, and shared their expertise with developing countries. Israeli doctors provide sophisticated medical care to Palestinian children and others from throughout the developing world. Israel regularly assists other nations when disaster strikes, and the country continues to absorb waves of refugees totaling in the millions, including thousands of Ethiopian Jews who have been welcomed in dignity and freedom.

Despite ongoing existential threats, Israelis maintain their zest for life. They have developed a thriving culture—from literature to music, art, film, and more. As a hand-painted sign in front of the bombed-out Dolphinarium discotheque affirmed: “We will not stop dancing.”

Sadly, today Israel faces perils as grave as ever—if not more so.

With Syria's help, Iran is building Israel's terrorist adversaries, especially Hezbollah and Hamas, into substantial military forces—well trained and funded, ensconced in fortified bunkers, and equipped with sophisticated rockets and other weaponry. As they build up long-term military strength, Hamas and its terrorist allies in Gaza rain a steady barrage of rockets onto Israeli men, women and children going about their daily lives. Meanwhile, the Iranian nuclear threat looms large.

To Israel's north, Hezbollah serves as Iran's proxy in Lebanon—undermining Lebanon's elected government, working to destroy Israel, and starting a war against the

Jewish state in the summer of 2006. UN Security Council Resolution 1701 called for dismantling of all armed militias in Lebanon and ending the supply of arms and material to Hezbollah. The resolution expanded the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) but did not authorize UNIFIL to engage Hezbollah forces or stop arms shipments without a specific request from Lebanon's government. Lebanon's government still has made no such request, even as Iran has re-armed Hezbollah beyond its pre-war capabilities.

To Israel's south, Iran and Syria provide Hamas—the terrorist organization that governs Gaza—and other terrorist groups with arms, training, fortification, and support to transform them into more lethal military powers. Terrorists bombard southern Israel with rockets day in and day out, as Iran supplies ever more deadly and longer-distance rockets.

To defend against those who would destroy it, Israel has built a powerful military, one that is always under civilian control and maintains a strict code of military conduct. By contrast, it faces enemies that laud suicide bombing, send children to fight, and position their fighters and rockets in their people's homes, mosques, schools, and hospitals.

The United States government broadly, and the U.S. Congress in particular, have stood steadfastly behind our ally Israel in its unceasing struggle for survival.

Resolution Recognizing Israel's 60th Anniversary and Reaffirming the Bonds of Friendship between the United States and Israel

<i>H. Con. Res. 322 introduced April 4, 2008</i>
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<i>Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)</i>

<i>227 Cosponsors</i>

<i>Passed April 23, 2008</i>

AJC supports the resolution and is grateful for America's friendship with Israel.
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The congressional resolution recognizing Israel's 60th anniversary "commends the people of Israel for their remarkable achievements in building a new state and a pluralistic, democratic society in the face of terrorism, as well as hostility, ostracism, and belligerence from many of their neighbors."

The resolution affirms that successive Israeli leaders have sought to achieve peace with Israel's Arab neighbors and have succeeded in establishing peaceful relations with Egypt and Jordan. It reaffirms the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the United States and Israel, and recommits Congress' enduring support for Israel as the country pursues peace with its neighbors.

In addition to the congressional resolution, seven members of the House of Representatives circulated a letter notifying their colleagues that Congress would celebrate Israel's 60th anniversary with a bipartisan series of weekly floor speeches beginning on April 3rd and continuing into June. The letter invites Members of Congress to join this

educational effort and share personal stories along with reasons for supporting Israel and a strong U.S.-Israel relationship.

The House letter states: “Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has been forced to wage a struggle for survival, facing hostile neighbors with numerically superior armed forces while also contending with the constant threat of terrorism against its civilians. Despite all of the hardships our democratic ally has faced over the past 60 years, Israel has flourished as the only true democracy in the Middle East and the United States' closest ally in the region.”

The American Jewish Committee profoundly appreciates Congressional solidarity with our ally Israel—and steadfast support for Israel in its struggle for survival. AJC strongly supports the resolution recognizing Israel’s 60th anniversary and reaffirming the close bonds between our two countries, and welcomes the congressional initiative to highlight Members’ personal experiences.

Resolution Condemning Rocket Attacks Against Israel
<i>H.Res.951 introduced January 29, 2008</i> <i>Scott Garrett (R-NJ)</i> <i>265 Cosponsors</i> <i>Passed March 5, 2008</i>
AJC supports the resolution condemning rocket attacks.

Since Israel completely withdrew from Gaza in 2005, organized terrorists have fired more than 4,000 rockets and mortar shells from Gaza into neighboring Israel, deliberately targeting civilian communities and violating elemental human rights. In the first months of this year, terrorists launched over 1,280 rockets and mortars—an average of 80 missiles per week—bombarding the southwestern corner of Israel that borders Gaza.

The rockets strike men, women and children, hitting homes, schools, playgrounds, farms and infrastructure. Israel’s brave citizens continue their lives in the face of an unrelenting assault—with parents terrified for families, traumatized children living in constant fear.

The House resolution condemns this ongoing barrage, recognizes that it violates human rights and international law, affirms Israel’s right to defend its citizens, and calls on all nations to stop the flow of terrorist weaponry and personnel to the Palestinian territories.

AJC urged Representatives to join the resolution, saying it “raises the voice of the U.S. House of Representatives in condemnation of this relentless, vicious assault on innocent Israeli civilians, and it calls on all nations to do their part to put an end to it—especially those states that aid and equip it, and those in a position to prevent terrorist equipment and personnel from crossing international borders.”

IRAN'S NUCLEAR ASPIRATIONS

In brazen defiance of the UN Security Council, Iran is moving closer to nuclear weapons capability. Iran has ignored Security Council demands to stop enriching uranium and open nuclear facilities to full inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Unless stopped, Iran will be able to produce nuclear weapons within an estimated one to seven years. Iran already has missiles to deliver those weapons across the Middle East and beyond.

Strong pressure on Iran—diplomatic, political, economic, and strategic—may be the best chance for the United States and our allies to address the Iranian nuclear threat peacefully and to avoid making a horrific choice in the near future: use force against Iran or allow Iran's reckless and tyrannical regime to possess the ultimate destructive weapon.

The November 2007 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) misleadingly emphasized Iran's reported decision to temporarily halt one part of its nuclear program. Significantly, however, the report found that Iran restarted its enrichment program in 2005, "made significant progress in 2007," and continues enriching today. The report judged that Iran's leadership remains committed to "the eventual development of nuclear weapons" and that enrichment "is how Iran probably would first produce enough fissile material for a weapon." The NIE concluded that Iran is likely to enrich enough uranium to produce a nuclear bomb within two to seven years—but could do it sooner.

In the months since the NIE was released, Iran has installed new-generation centrifuges that can produce enriched uranium two to three times faster than the predecessor models. Iran recently announced that 6,000 additional centrifuges were being installed at an existing enrichment plant, giving the country the capacity to produce a bomb core in a matter of months. Meanwhile, when Iran's heavy water reactor is fully operational, it is expected to produce enough weapons-grade plutonium for one or two nuclear bombs per year. The uranium Iran is enriching cannot be used for its "civilian" reactor, for which the Russians recently began supplying fuel, and the plutonium has no civilian uses.

The IAEA has expressed "serious concern" about a clandestine Iranian nuclear project with apparent military ties, saying that obtaining answers is "critical to an assessment of a possible military dimension to Iran's nuclear program." Overall, the IAEA reports that its "knowledge of Iran's current nuclear programme is diminishing" and warns that "[t]his is especially important in light of Iran's undeclared activities for almost two decades."

The threat that a nuclear-armed Iran would pose is evident in its behavior today. Iran already pursues an aggressive expansionist agenda—partly through its Iranian Revolutionary Guard, its proxy Hezbollah, and other terrorist groups. It participates in and supports the Iraqi insurgency, obstructs the elected Lebanese government in an effort to

garner influence, and fuels the Arab-Israeli conflict by providing increasingly sophisticated weapons, training, and support to Israel's terrorist adversaries including Hamas and Hezbollah. Iran's government trains its youth for Jihad against the West, especially the United States and Israel. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and other Iranian leaders preach anti-Semitism and repeatedly call for annihilating Israel.

Nuclear arms would embolden Iran further and the international community, fearing nuclear retaliation, would have little ability to respond effectively. Iran's nuclear progress already is fueling a move toward nuclear development across the combustible Middle East, a recipe for disaster and the potential death knell to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. A nuclear Iran also would create a high risk of deadly arms transferred to terrorists.

Iran egregiously violates its own people's human rights through arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture, extra judicial murders, and cruel and inhuman punishments such as public executions, hangings, and stonings. Women, religious and ethnic minorities, and opponents of the regime are especially vulnerable. The regime's many and severe human rights violations include trampling on workers' international rights and persecuting labor leaders. In 2007, Iran's government imprisoned two severely ill labor leaders and denied them medical treatment, in violation of Iran's obligations as a member of the International Labor Organization. **AJC supported a House resolution (H.Con.Res.203), sponsored by the bipartisan Iran Working Group, condemning the persecution of Iran's labor leaders by the tyrannical regime, demanding their immediate release, and expressing solidarity with the workers of Iran seeking political freedom and individual liberty.** The resolution passed by an overwhelming 418-1 vote.

Iran Counter-Proliferation Act	
<i>S.970 introduced March 22, 2007</i>	<i>H.R.1400 introduced March 8, 2007</i>
<i>Gordon Smith (R-OR)</i>	<i>Tom Lantos (D-CA)</i>
<i>Richard Durbin (D-IL)</i>	<i>Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL)</i>
<i>69 Cosponsors</i>	<i>324 Cosponsors</i>
<i>Awaiting Committee Action</i>	<i>Passed September 25, 2007</i>
AJC supports the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act.	

The Iran Counter-Proliferation Act would strengthen existing efforts to stop Iran's nuclear program, particularly by increasing the economic pressure on Iran's regime. Among other provisions, the Act extends sanctions under the Iran Sanctions Act (ISA) to additional financial entities and elements of the energy industry and eliminates an ISA loophole that allows parent companies to escape sanctions by doing business through offshore subsidiaries. The Act also reinstates full restrictions on U.S. imports from Iran, places additional limits on U.S. exports to that country, and restricts U.S. cooperation on nuclear, missile, or advanced conventional weapons with countries that assist Iran in these areas.

Early in the 110th Congress, Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Tom Lantos introduced legislation (H.R.957) that would extend the ISA sanctions to additional financial

institutions, entities, and elements of the energy industry. The House Foreign Affairs Committee approved this bill on February 15, 2007, and the bill's provisions were subsequently incorporated into the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act.

AJC strongly supports the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act. In June 2007 letters to Congress, AJC wrote: “Iran is rapidly moving to nuclear arms capability, flouting UN Security Council demands that it suspend its nuclear activities....The United States and the international community must exhaust every economic, diplomatic and political tool to press Iran to halt its nuclear drive.”

Iran Sanctions Enabling Act	
<i>S.1430 introduced May 17, 2007</i>	<i>H.R.2347 introduced May 16, 2007</i>
<i>Barack Obama (D-IL)</i>	<i>Barney Frank (D-MA)</i>
<i>29 Cosponsors</i>	<i>44 Cosponsors</i>
<i>Awaiting Committee Action</i>	<i>Passed July 31, 2007</i>
AJC supports the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act.	

Iran is experiencing an economic crisis, largely due to rampant corruption, poor economic policies, and international sanctions. The Iranian regime has allowed its oil and gas infrastructure to deteriorate, making the country vitally dependent on foreign investment just to maintain the current inadequate flow of oil.

The national energy sector, the mainstay of Iran's economy, sustains the country's regime, along with that regime's nuclear program and support for terrorism. Divesting public funds from companies that invest more than \$20 million in Iran's energy sector serves to tighten economic pressure on the regime. Billions of dollars of U.S. public employee pension funds and other public funds are invested in the foreign corporations that most heavily engage in Iran's oil sector—accounting for a significant portion of the investments in these corporations.

A movement is sweeping the country to divest public funds from the companies whose business in Iran's energy sector upholds its horrific regime. Divestment laws and policies are already in place in many states and some local governments. The Iran Sanctions Enabling Act would authorize state and local divestment decisions that meet the bills' criteria, and would protect states, investment companies, pension fund managers, and their employees from legal claims that might arise from divestment within the scope of state and local divestment laws.

AJC supports the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act. In a July 27, 2007, letter to the House of Representatives, AJC said the House measure represents “an appropriate Federal response to widespread and well-grounded popular sentiment demanding an end to ‘business as usual’” with a regime that threatens peace and human rights.

<p style="text-align: center;">Ending World Bank Disbursements to Iran until IAEA Certifies Compliance</p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><i>H.Con.Res.235 introduced October 16, 2007 Mark Kirk (R-IL) 51 Cosponsors Awaiting Committee Action</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">AJC supports the resolution urging suspension of World Bank funds to Iran.</p>

Iran's defiant refusal to suspend its nuclear drive violates UN Security Council resolutions and profoundly threatens regional and world peace and security. Yet the World Bank continues to pour money directly into Iran's government, although the regime is not held accountable for these funds. The Bank currently funds government projects totaling at least \$1.355 billion, including a program in Isfahan, the headquarters of Iran's nuclear program.

As part of the UN family, World Bank disbursements directly undercut UN Security Council sanctions that are intended to pressure Iran's regime to end its nuclear race. World Bank funding for Iran also undermines U.S. sanctions against Iran—even as the United States remains the Bank's top investor, contributing nearly a billion dollars per year in 2006 and 2007.

The House resolution urges the World Bank to end disbursements to Iran until the IAEA certifies Iran's compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and with its obligations under the Nuclear NPT. The resolution urges the Security Council to order the World Bank to end disbursements to Iran if the Bank fails to take action on its own.

AJC supports the resolution seeking an end to World Bank disbursements to Iran unless Iran complies with UN Security Council resolutions and its NPT requirements by stopping to enrich uranium and opening its nuclear program to full inspection.

COMBATING ANTI-SEMITISM

The United States Congress has played a major role in focusing attention on resurgent anti-Semitism and advancing concrete measures to address the situation. In recent years the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has been the primary venue to address new anti-Semitic outbreaks in Europe, and the subject is discussed regularly by the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE or Helsinki Commission).

The Helsinki Commission has been instrumental in successfully pressing the OSCE to reappoint a special envoy with responsibility for combating anti-Semitism. In February 2008 the Helsinki Commission, under the co-chairmanship of Senator Benjamin Cardin

(D-MD) and Representative Alcee Hastings (D-FL), held its first hearing of the 110th Congress on the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe. During the hearing, Representative Christopher Smith (R-NJ) focused on the importance of police training to combat hate crimes, including anti-Semitism. Following initial urging by the United States, the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) adopted a police training program modeled on the American approach. The program now has been implemented by 15 European governments.

In 2004, Congress passed the Global Anti-Semitism Review Act (P.L.108-332), establishing a Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism in the Department of State. In April 2008, the Office of the Special Envoy released its second report to Congress, titled *Contemporary Global Anti-Semitism*. This report unabashedly discusses how criticism of Israel has become “the new anti-Semitism,” saying, “Disproportionate criticism of the Jewish State and/or Israelis and demonizing them as barbaric, unprincipled, selfish, inhumane, etc. is anti-Semitic and has the effect of causing global audiences to associate those bad attributes with Jews in general.”

The report cites the special role of the OSCE in addressing the problem, and makes particular mention of and reprints in full the European Union Monitoring Centre’s “working definition” of anti-Semitism. This definition offers concrete examples of where anti-Israel animus should be considered anti-Semitism, such as placards at anti-Israel rallies reading “Death to the Jews—Death to Israel” and “Stars of David emblazoned with swastikas.” The report singles out the extensive anti-Semitism at the United Nations, concluding that “The collective effect of unremitting criticism of Israel, coupled with a failure to pay attention to regimes that are demonstrably guilty of grave violations, has the effect of reinforcing the notion that the Jewish state is one of the sources, if not the greatest source, of abuse of the rights of others, and thus intentionally or not encourages anti-Semitism.”

In September 2007, Congress responded to the challenge by creating an Anti-Semitism Task Force, chaired by Representatives Ron Klein (D-FL) and Mike Pence (R-IN), to “bring to light specific cases of anti-Semitism and educate Members of Congress, world leaders and citizens about the horrors that these cases pose on society.”

The American Jewish Committee has played a major role in pressing Congress and the U.S. government to utilize the OSCE as a venue to address the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe. AJC and its Jacob Blaustein Institute took the lead among NGOs in calling for the appointment of an OSCE Personal Representative to Combat Anti-Semitism. The Helsinki Commission invited AJC Director of International Jewish Affairs Rabbi Andrew Baker to testify at its February hearing. At that hearing, Rabbi Baker described the continuing problems and stressed the importance of maintaining support for the OSCE initiatives, including U.S. financial contributions to the ODIHR police training program.

AJC Executive Director David A. Harris welcomed the State Department's report and highlighted its focus on "how the demonizing of Israel, often through the use of classic anti-Semitic and Nazi imagery, fuels prejudice against Jews." AJC staff members worked closely with the European Union Monitoring Centre in discussions that resulted in the drafting and adoption of its working definition of anti-Semitism, and AJC looks forward to working with the Congressional Task Force on Anti-Semitism in the future.

CENTRAL and EASTERN EUROPE

With the fall of Communism, small Jewish communities in Central and Eastern Europe confronted enormous challenges in reviving communal life and reestablishing religious, educational, and cultural institutions. These efforts required a thorough examination of Holocaust-era history, as well as legal efforts directed at restitution of former Jewish communal and private property. In addition, Congress and the broader U.S. government have pressed these new democracies to enact restitution legislation and protect important heritage sites. Despite considerable progress, problems still remain.

In November 2007, Representative Robert Wexler (D-FL) wrote to the Lithuanian Prime Minister and to the leader of that country's opposition party, urging the Government of Lithuania to move forward on Jewish communal property legislation.

In Lithuania, commercial construction continues on the site of the historic Snipiskes Cemetery in Vilnius, despite unsuccessful attempts by U.S. government officials, including the Chairman of the Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad and the U.S. Ambassador to Lithuania. Representatives Michael Ferguson (R-NJ), Joseph Crowley (D-NY), and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) introduced H.Con.Res.255, a measure designed to increase the pressure on Lithuanian authorities and faulting Lithuania for permitting this desecration to continue.

The Republic of Poland is one of the few new NATO and EU members that has not yet adopted legislation to compensate the former owners of private property—a group that includes Holocaust survivors and their heirs, as well as Polish Americans and Polish citizens. Representatives Wexler and Elton Gallegly (R-CA) wrote to the new Polish Prime Minister urging his government to enact legislation to address this problem.

AJC has been at the forefront of efforts to press Eastern European governments to address Holocaust-related concerns. AJC raised the issue of communal restitution and the Vilnius cemetery during a September 2007 meeting in New York with Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus.

AJC has pioneered programs to advance Polish-Jewish relations and increase understanding and dialogue. It has long recognized the importance of resolving the

private property issue in Poland as a factor in both Polish-Jewish and Polish-American relations. AJC commends the Representatives who have raised these issues with Warsaw’s new leadership.

More generally, AJC continues extensive discussions with Senate and House leaders on how Congress can assist in resolving effectively the unmet claims of Holocaust survivors and their heirs.

Support for the Museum of the History of the Polish Jews Act
<i>H.R.3320 introduced August 2, 2007 Christopher Smith (R-NJ) 17 Cosponsors Passed House November 14, 2007. Awaiting Senate Floor Action</i>
AJC supports the Museum of the History of the Polish Jews Act.

More than 60 years after the end of World War II, construction on the Museum of the History of Polish Jews began in April 2007 on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto. The \$100 million project is designed to retell the story of the millennium-long history of Jewish life in Poland, educate future generations of Polish students about their country’s Jewish past, and contribute to efforts to combat anti-Semitism.

The majority of funding for the project will come from the City of Warsaw, the Government of Poland, and private donors in the United States. The Support for the Museum of the History of the Polish Jews Act would designate \$5 million toward the Museum as an expression of official American support for the project. The bill passed the House on November 14, 2007, by an overwhelming 407-13. The bill was then passed by a Senate committee, with an amendment, and is awaiting further action.

In a November 13, 2007 letter to the House of Representatives, AJC wrote that “all societies benefit from visible reminders and documentation of their histories, and this museum will enrich the Polish people’s understanding of their cultural roots.” The letter went on to say that the museum will “serve the important purpose of emphasizing that the history of Polish Jewry, so often viewed through the lens of that community’s destruction in the Shoah, is in fact the narrative of a robust and diverse civilization.”

Visa Waiver Legislation	
<i>S.653 introduced February 15, 2007 George Voinovich (R-OH) 4 cosponsors</i>	<i>H.R.1543 introduced March 15, 2007 Rahm Emanuel (D-IL) 14 cosponsors</i>
<i>Related provisions incorporated into Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007 (H.R.1) and signed into law on August 3, 2007</i>	
AJC supports this legislation to expand visa waivers.	

America's allies in Central and Eastern Europe have made remarkable achievements in rebuilding free and democratic societies. Now members of NATO, the new democratic nations of Central and Eastern Europe have proven to be reliable and capable partners in military operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and in our common fight against global terrorism.

The Visa Waiver Program, started in 1986, enables nationals of certain countries to travel to the United States for tourism or business for 90 days or less without obtaining a visa. Early in the 110th Congress, members of both the Senate and the House introduced legislation designed to expand the visa waiver program to include countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Currently, 27 countries participate in the visa waiver program.

In the spring of 2007, during debate on the Improving America's Security Act of 2007 (S.4), Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) introduced an amendment that included provisions related to the visa waiver program. The amendment, which was included in the final conference report on the bill (H.R.1) that was signed into law on August 3, 2007, changed the nonimmigrant visa refusal rate threshold from 3% to 10%. The change would make a few additional countries eligible for the program, while leaving out significant U.S. allies in the region. The measure also included a variety of modernization measures and security enhancements.

AJC has been supportive of measures aimed at expanding the Visa Waiver Program to include America's closest allies in Central and Eastern Europe. In cooperation with Representatives Robert Wexler (D-FL) and Phil English (R-PA), AJC hosted the first roundtable consultation on the implementation of Visa Waiver Program legislation in November 2007. The event, chaired by AJC Executive Director David A. Harris, included top representatives of 14 Central and Eastern European countries. The roundtable focused on developing effective strategies for implementing recent legislation aimed at modernizing several outdated and restrictive requirements to gain entry to the program.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS FUNDING

Fiscal 2009 Congressional Budget Resolution	
<i>S.Con.Res.70 introduced March 7, 2008</i>	<i>H.Con.Res.312 introduced March 7, 2008</i>
<i>Kent Conrad (D-ND)</i>	<i>John Spratt (D-SC)</i>
<i>0 Cosponsors</i>	<i>0 Cosponsors</i>
<i>Awaiting Floor Action</i>	<i>Passed March 13, 2008</i>
AJC supports full funding for the FY 2009 international affairs budget.	

During the legislative year, both Congressional chambers work to create a U.S. budget and appropriate funds to government agencies and programs for the next fiscal year. Budgeting and funding for international affairs are part of this process.

In March 2008, the Senate and the House each passed their own fiscal year 2009 budget resolution. The Senate resolution includes a total of \$39.8 billion for international affairs, the full amount that President Bush requested. The Senate Budget Committee provided for \$4.1 billion less for the international affairs budget, but the full Senate approved an amendment restoring the requested amount. The amendment, sponsored by Senators Joseph Biden (D-DE) and Richard Lugar (R-IN), passed by an impressive 73-23 vote.

The House-passed budget resolution includes \$38.3 billion for international affairs, \$1.5 billion less than the President's request. A conference committee seeking to reconcile the overall Senate and House budget resolutions faces significant obstacles, even as attention turns to the appropriations process.

AJC supports full funding of the President's fiscal year 2008 international affairs budget request, and supports the Senate budget resolution insofar as it provides for that full amount. On March 12, 2008, AJC sent a letter urging Senators to support the amendment restoring full funding for the international affairs account. The "relatively small international affairs account provides the resources for critical international efforts," AJC wrote. This amount can provide for critical assistance to Israel, humanitarian aid to the Darfur region of Sudan, and fund numerous other urgent international affairs priorities. Throughout the budget and appropriations cycles, AJC will continue to advocate full funding of the international affairs budget.

Fiscal 2008 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations
<i>Bills not yet introduced in the Senate or House</i>
AJC supports additional funding for peacekeeping and humanitarian relief.

In addition to the normal appropriations process, Congress can appropriate additional funds through an emergency supplemental appropriations bill. In October, the Administration sent a request to Congress for over \$5.4 billion in additional funding for fiscal year 2008, which includes over \$1.5 billion for the war in Iraq, \$220 million for the Palestinian Authority, and \$334 million for peacekeeping in the Darfur region of Sudan.

The 2008 fiscal year budget included just over \$1 billion for funding to support peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and a political process in Darfur, including \$580 million for the UN-African Union peacekeeping force (UNAMID).

The requested supplemental appropriations will include an additional \$334 million for UNAMID, \$335 million for disaster and famine assistance, and additional funding to train and outfit peacekeepers and support other diplomatic efforts. Congress is expected to consider a fiscal year 2008 emergency supplemental bill in May 2008.

AJC supports additional funding for peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and diplomatic efforts in Sudan. An April 1, 2008 letter signed by AJC and other faith groups read “we applaud the U.S. Government’s commitment to the people of Sudan, reflected by efforts to broker the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, ongoing diplomatic efforts aimed at a sustainable resolution to the crisis in Darfur and continued financial commitments to humanitarian relief, peacekeeping and development efforts throughout Sudan. However, even with the additional emergency spending provided for Sudan in the Fiscal Year 2008 omnibus appropriations bill, we share a deep concern that current funds are insufficient to meet the dire needs on the ground.”

AFRICA

Five years after the government-backed Janjaweed militias began a scorched earth offensive in the Darfur region of Sudan, the conflict has claimed more than 200,000 lives and left more than 2.5 million displaced. Despite action by the United Nations and a United States designation as “genocide,” the situation in Darfur continues to deteriorate. On July 31, 2007, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1769 authorizing the deployment of a 26,000-strong joint United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) force. Until the UNAMID forces can arrive, the Darfuri civilians must rely on the under-funded and undermanned African Union peacekeeping force, a group helpless to intervene as Janjaweed militias continue their campaign against non-Arab Darfuris.

The United States continues to play a leadership role in seeking to stop these atrocities, even as advocates call for more to be done. The 110th Congress passed legislation that bars the U.S. government from awarding contracts to companies that help finance the atrocities in Darfur, prohibits U.S. companies from investing in Sudan, and authorizes and protects state and local governments who choose to divest from or prohibit contracts with such companies.

Divestment efforts, combined with diplomacy, reduce the resources available to the Sudanese government to perpetrate the crisis. Two dozen states, 55 universities, and cities throughout the country have already placed restrictions on Sudan-related investments, and many more have initiated the divestment process.

In addition to divestment efforts, the House passed a resolution (H.Res.22) calling on China to help end the genocide. China’s involvement in Sudan—politically, militarily and economically—is extensive, and its investment in Sudan’s oil sector gives it strong leverage to influence the Sudanese government’s policies. In the past year, China has continued its relationship with Sudan by providing interest-free loans and blocking additional UN action against Sudan. At the same time, China has responded to international pressure by extending moderate humanitarian aid, appointing a special

envoy to Sudan, and contributing military engineers to UNAMID. In January 2008, a senior Chinese diplomat told Sudan that “the world is running out of patience over what’s going in Darfur.”

Aside from legislation concerning the ongoing crisis in Sudan, Congress has considered a number of bills related to health care, poverty reduction, and armed conflict in Africa, including U.S. political and economic support for debt relief, peacekeeping operations, and the protection of human rights across the continent.

As a community that has suffered persecution and genocide all too often in our history, AJC continues to work with Congress, the Bush Administration and international partners to help bring true meaning to the words “never again.”

AJC’s commitment to the African continent, demonstrated by the work of its recently-established Africa Institute, extends beyond Darfur and the implementation of Sudan’s Comprehensive Peace Agreement. AJC advocates for increased U.S. attention to conflict mediation, economic development, and human rights throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act of 2007	
<i>S.2271 introduced October 31, 2007</i>	<i>H.R.180 introduced January 4, 2007</i>
<i>Christopher Dodd (D-CT)</i>	<i>Barbara Lee (D-CA)</i>
<i>0 Cosponsors</i>	<i>152 Cosponsors</i>
<i>Signed by the President December 31, 2007</i>	
AJC supports the Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act of 2007.	

Millions of dollars in U.S. public funds support companies that do business with Sudan. Sudanese officials in Khartoum have been unresponsive to political pressure. Divestment and diplomatic efforts would reduce the resources available to the Sudanese government to perpetrate genocide.

As the conflict in Darfur reached its 5th year at the beginning of the 110th Congress, the Darfur Accountability and Divestment Act was introduced to bar the U.S. government from awarding contracts to companies helping to finance the genocide in Darfur and protect state and local governments who choose to divest from or prohibit contracts with such companies. By exempting companies that are promoting the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement, work in Southern Sudan, or provide military equipment and humanitarian aid in the region. The bill included exceptions to ensure that divestment efforts focus on punishing the Sudanese government and do not harm the victims.

On July 31, 2007, just days before breaking for recess, the House of Representatives passed the bill by an overwhelming 418-1. Almost three months later, a Senate panel unanimously passed a slightly-altered version of the legislation under the name “The Sudan Accountability and Divestment Act.” Both the Senate and the House passed identical legislation by unanimous consent on December 12 and December 18,

respectively. The President had expressed reservations about the legislation but ultimately signed the bill into law on December 31, 2007.

AJC supports divestment from Sudan as a way to limit the resources that support genocide and harm innocent Sudanese. In an October 3, 2007 letter to the Senate, AJC wrote that “the divestment measure the Senate is considering represents an appropriate Federal response to widespread and well-grounded popular sentiment demanding an end to ‘business as usual’ with a regime that pose profound threats to peace and human rights.”

Jubilee Act for Responsible Lending and Expanded Debt Cancellation of 2007	
<i>S.2166 introduced October 16, 2007</i>	<i>H.R.2634 introduced June 7, 2007</i>
<i>Bob Casey (D-PA)</i>	<i>Maxine Waters (D-CA)</i>
<i>25 Cosponsors</i>	<i>104 Cosponsors</i>
<i>Awaiting Committee Action</i>	<i>Passed on April 16, 2008</i>
AJC supports the Jubilee Act.	

At the G8 conference in Glasgow, Scotland in 2005, the United States and seven other member countries agreed to cancel 100 percent of the debts owed by eligible poor nations to Paris Club members, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the African Development Bank. The agreement led to the creation of the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI), which has attained some success in meeting its goals. Countries like Cameroon, Uganda, and Zambia have used the tens of millions of dollars that they saved in debt relief to reduce national poverty.

The success of this program is the catalyst for the Jubilee Act of 2007, legislation that would expand the number of countries eligible for debt cancellation for money owed to the United States and international financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF. Eligible low-income countries would have to meet requirements in order to receive debt cancellation, including that the funds saved from debt cancellation will go towards anti-poverty programs, that allocation of funds for such programs will be divided among a broad cross-section of civil society groups, that each country produces a spending report.

AJC supports the Jubilee Act as an encouraging step in the ongoing fight against global poverty. In a January 23, 2008 letter to the House, AJC wrote “passing the Jubilee Act would afford that dignity to people in some of the world’s poorest regions by giving low-income countries the tools to provide life-saving social services and meet their development needs.”

Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2007	
<i>S.1175 introduced April 19, 2007</i> <i>Richard Durbin (D-IL)</i> <i>34 cosponsors</i> <i>Awaiting Committee Action</i>	<i>H.R.2620 introduced June 7, 2007</i> <i>Jim Marshall (D-GA)</i> <i>12 cosponsors</i> <i>Awaiting Committee Action</i>
AJC supports the Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2007.	

An estimated 250,000 children are exploited each day in state-run armies, paramilitaries and guerilla groups around the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. These child soldiers serve as military combatants, human mine detectors, and sex slaves.

The Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2007 seeks to combat this ongoing atrocity by prohibiting the United States government from providing military funding to any country identified by the Department of State as using or tolerating child soldiers. The bill authorizes the President to reinstate assistance upon certifying to Congress that the government in question is implementing compliance measures that prohibit the use or recruitment of child soldiers. The bill allows the President to waive military aid restrictions if such a waiver is in the national interest.

AJC supports the bipartisan Child Soldier Prevention Act as a sound initiative that would establish fundamental human rights protections and ensure that American military assistance does not finance the exploitation of children in any armed conflict while simultaneously maintaining flexibility.

LATIN AMERICA

Resolution on Iran’s Influence in Latin America	
	<i>H.Res.435 introduced May 23, 2007</i> <i>Ron Klein (D-FL)</i> <i>Connie Mack (R-FL)</i> <i>40 Cosponsors</i> <i>Passed on November 5, 2007</i>
AJC supports the resolution on Iran’s influence in Latin America.	

In the face of Iran’s mounting presence in the Western hemisphere and increasing threats against America’s interest, Congress passed a resolution aimed at addressing the disturbing trend. The resolution denounces Iran’s growing influence and encourages active U.S. engagement in bilateral and multi-lateral talks for the implementation of sweeping anti-terrorist measures at the national and hemispheric level.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has repeatedly made public statements that a world without the United States is an attainable possibility. Iranian-proxy Hezbollah, a group responsible for homicide bombings from Beirut to Buenos Aires, has a growing

presence throughout the region. In particular, Cuba and Venezuela have been supportive of Iran, holding the infamous distinction as two of three countries at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to support Iran’s Nuclear Program (Syria, another state sponsor of terror, is the third). Venezuela’s growing economic, political, and diplomatic ties with Venezuela threaten regional stability. In January 2007, leaders of the two countries announced the creation of a \$2 billion joint fund to finance projects intended to thwart U.S. domination.

AJC supports the resolution decrying Iran’s influence in Latin America. In an October 23, 2007, letter to the House, AJC wrote that ties between Iran and the region “could give immeasurable financial and logistical support to the worldwide terrorist network. As Iran’s influence continues to grow in Latin America, significant and dangerous threats to the United States are festering in our own backyard.”

U.S.-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement	
<i>S.2113 introduced September 27, 2007</i>	<i>H.R.3688 introduced September 27, 2007</i>
<i>Max Baucus (D-MO)</i>	<i>Steny Hoyer (D-MD)</i>
<i>Charles Grassley (R-IA)</i>	<i>John Boehner (R-OH)</i>
<i>0 cosponsors</i>	<i>0 cosponsors</i>
<i>Signed by the President December 14, 2007</i>	
AJC supports the U.S.-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement.	

Despite differences on free trade between the White House and Democratic Congressional leaders, in May 2007 the Administration came to an agreement with Senate and House leadership to incorporate labor and environmental standards into pending free trade agreements, potentially paving the way for action on agreements with Peru, Panama, Colombia, and South Korea.

The first such breakthrough came on the Peru agreement, as relevant committees in the Senate and the House approved it in October 2007, and it passed the House by a 285-132 vote in early November. A month later, the Senate passed the House version and President Bush signed the Agreement into law on December 14, 2007. The U.S.-Peru agreement will advance economic development and integration in the region through a \$1 billion increase in exports of American goods to Peru.

AJC supports the U.S.-Peru agreement as a means to address Latin America’s unequal distribution of wealth and expedite reform of failed government models. In a November 9, 2007, statement applauding House passage of the agreement, AJC said “the U.S. and Peru have a long history of cooperation, especially in the fight against drug trafficking and terrorism.” The statement went on to say that action on the agreement “further reaffirms America’s commitment to the stability and prosperity of the Hemisphere.”

U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement
<i>H.R.5724 introduced April 8, 2008</i> <i>Steny Hoyer (D-MD)</i> <i>John Boehner (R-OH)</i> <i>0 cosponsors</i> <i>Awaiting Floor Action</i>
AJC supports the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement.

Following approval of the U.S.-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement, attention shifted to the stalled pact with Colombia. The Agreement, signed in November 2006, has come under fire from labor groups who oppose the deal. President Bush and proponents of the Colombia agreement have made Congressional passage a priority for the coming months.

The U.S.-Colombia agreement would remove tariffs on U.S. goods entering Colombia and eliminate tariffs on over 80 percent of U.S. exports. Opposition to the agreement has focused on claims that the Colombian authorities have not taken adequate steps to address continuing violence against Colombian union leaders. Proponents of the pact say the Colombian government is responding seriously, has stemmed the violence, and implementation of the deal would further help promote safety and democracy.

The rules governing the Colombia agreement require Congress to vote on the measure within 90 legislative days of the President sending the pact to the Hill. Despite the controversy surrounding the Agreement, President Bush sent the implementing legislation to Congress on April 8, 2008. Two days later, House leadership responded by introducing a resolution (H.Res.1092) to amend House rules and allow the 90 days to lapse. The resolution passed 224-195 on a largely party-line vote, allowing the House additional time to consider the Agreement.

AJC supports the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement as a means to foster engagement and strengthen much-needed political and strategic alliances. In an April 8, 2008 letter to Congress, AJC wrote “Colombia has proven time and time again that the country is a trustworthy friend and ally of the United States both in the Hemisphere and in the international arena.” The letter went on to say that “AJC recognizes that these agreements are not a panacea to resolving the panoply of challenges facing Latin American societies,” but that “free trade agreements help set standards and conditions that act as a spur for transformations in many spheres.” Finally, in response to concerns regarding the Colombian government’s ability to control violence, AJC said that “while we do not minimize the serious challenge posed to Colombia by this problem, and the distance yet to be covered in responding to it, the administration of Colombian President Uribe has undertaken serious efforts to stop the murder of unionists and to bring the perpetrators to justice.”

President Uribe was presented with AJC’s Light Unto the Nations Award in May 2007 in recognition of his friendship with the United States, Israel and the

Jewish people and his commitment to the pursuit of security, peace and broad-based economic growth for all Colombians.

Trade Preference Extension Act of 2008
<i>H.R.5264 introduced February 7, 2008</i> <i>Charles Rangel (D-NY)</i> <i>0 Cosponsors</i> <i>Signed by the President February 29, 2008</i>
AJC supports the Trade Preference Extension Act of 2008.

The Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act has been vital to building relationships with important strategic allies of the United States, and has been particularly helpful in curbing illegal manufacturing, trafficking, and other activities. The preferences, which encompass Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador, also benefit U.S. retailers, importers, and business investments in the region. In February 2008, days before the preferences were set to expire, both the Senate and House passed legislation extending the trade preferences through the end of 2008. President Bush signed the measure into law on February 29, the day the preferences were set to expire.

AJC supported extending the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act and believes that a failure to renew this program would have undermined important regional trading partners and American interests.

IMMIGRATION

AJC is a long-standing advocate of an immigration system that is consistent with both America's pluralistic identity and homeland security. Against that background, comprehensive immigration reform should couple strong, fair, and effective enforcement with humane reforms that protect families, ensure workers' rights, and end marginalization of immigrant communities. A comprehensive approach to immigration reform would allow undocumented immigrants to regularize their status only after undergoing background checks, paying back taxes and fines, and learning to speak English. In addition, immigration reform should include targeted and effective enforcement provisions to secure America's borders.

The 110th Congress began with leaders in both chambers calling immigration a priority issue. President Bush reaffirmed his call for comprehensive immigration reform. In May 2007, the Senate took up a bipartisan bill (S.1248) that drew broad but thin support as it mandated significant increases in border security, a path to legal status for many undocumented immigrants, a temporary worker program, and a change from a family-based to a merit-based system for future immigration determinations.

The fragile bipartisan compromise crumbled on the Senate floor following two politically-charged procedural votes that failed to move the bill forward. In a final attempt to pass a bipartisan comprehensive bill, Congressional leadership and President Bush resurrected a slightly-revised measure a few weeks later. The new bill, S.1639, included \$4.4 billion in mandatory funding for border security and enforcement. Despite attempts to address concerns from both sides, the bill ultimately collapsed due to lingering concerns by Senators on both sides of the aisle, coupled with opposition to any form of “amnesty” from some quarters and claims from other quarters that the bill was too onerous for immigrants. Notwithstanding AJC’s concerns about the bill, including provisions regarding the treatment of asylum seekers, AJC expressed disappointment at the bill’s failure.

With Senate action stalled, Congressmen Heath Shuler (D-NC) and Brian Bilbray (R-CA) introduced the Secure America through Verification and Enforcement Act (H.R.4088), enforcement-only legislation aimed at mandating universal participation in a flawed employment verification system. As discussed below, in early 2008, supporters of the bill began to seek to bypass the committee process and bring the bill directly to the floor.

Finally, the REAL ID Act, a bill mandating national identification standards enacted in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, took center stage as its implementation deadline grew near. Although Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff extended the deadline for states to comply with the Act until December 31, 2009, many opponents of the legislation continue to work to overturn the measure through legislation and lawsuits.

As prospects for comprehensive immigration reform grew dimmer, a number of narrower immigration measures gained traction. A provision of the Religious Workers Visa Program makes available up to 5,000 visas each year for religious workers employed by a broad range of religious denominations and organizations. Without Congressional action, the provision will expire on September 30, 2008. A bill extending the program (H.R.5570) passed the House Judiciary Committee on April 2, 2008, and is now awaiting action on the House floor.

The Iraqi Refugee Act (H.R.2486), introduced by Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-NY), is designed to grant automatic entry into the United States to Iraqi nationals who assisted the United States during the War in Iraq. The Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act of 2007 (S.656) introduced by Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) would grant legal permanent residency to Liberian refugees currently residing in the United States under temporary protected status. Additionally, advocates continue to work to move forward bills such as AgJobs and the DREAM Act, which had been included in S.1248 and S.1639, as stand-alone legislation.

Save America through Verification and Enforcement (SAVE) Act	
<i>S.2368 introduced November 15, 2007</i>	<i>H.R.4088 introduced November 6, 2007</i>
<i>David Vitter (R-LA)</i>	<i>Heath Shuler (D-NC)</i> <i>Brian Bilbray (R-CA)</i>
<i>4 Cosponsors</i>	<i>150 Cosponsors</i>
<i>Awaiting Committee Action</i>	<i>Awaiting Floor Action</i>
AJC's opposes the SAVE Act.	

In the shadow of the failed Senate debate on immigration reform, two Congressional advocates of enforcement-only legislation introduced the Save America through Verification and Enforcement (SAVE) Act in November 2007. The SAVE Act contemplates an enforcement-only approach to resolving the nation's immigration problems by increasing spending on border security, allocating additional public funding to prosecute and remove unauthorized workers, and deputizing state and the local law enforcement officers to serve as immigration agents.

The centerpiece of the SAVE Act is the expansion of an employment verification program currently being piloted on a voluntary basis. The program, coined "E-Verify," relies on a database that the Social Security Administration estimates contains 17.8 million errors affecting 12.8 million U.S. citizens. The SAVE Act would require employers to terminate anyone whose information is not in the database, including those who do not appear on that list through no fault of their own.

On March 11, 2008, Representative Thelma Drake (R-VA) filed a discharge petition, a procedural maneuver designed to bypass the committee process and bring the SAVE Act directly to the floor. Democratic leadership opposed the petition and urged members not to sign. If the petition receives the requisite 218 signatories, the bill will be forced to the floor. As of this printing, 186 Members of Congress (13 Democrats and 173 Republicans) have signed the petition.

AJC strongly opposes the SAVE Act. In a March 11 letter AJC wrote, "rather than systemically addressing the challenges we face, the SAVE Act would compound the dysfunction in our current system, undermine our national security, and erode values upon which America was built." The letter went on to say that the SAVE Act would be "likely to increase the climate of suspicion against immigrants, create millions of innocent victims among American citizens, and undermine attempts to develop a well-reasoned, balanced solution to our country's immigration challenges."

Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act	
<i>S.774 introduced March 6, 2007</i>	<i>H.R.1275 introduced March 1, 2007</i>
<i>Richard Durbin (D-IL)</i>	<i>Howard Berman (D-CA)</i>
<i>Chuck Hagel (R-NE)</i>	<i>Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA)</i>
<i>Richard Lugar (R-IN)</i>	<i>Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL)</i>
<i>23 cosponsors</i>	<i>82 cosponsors</i>
<i>Related Bill S.2205 Failed Procedural Vote</i>	<i>Awaiting Committee Action</i>
AJC supports the DREAM Act.	

Each year, more than 50,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools, unable to access higher education or contribute back to American society. The DREAM Act would conditionally grant legal permanent residence to undocumented immigrants who meet certain educational requirements, pass background checks, and entered the United States before they turned 16 years old. These students would become eligible for in-state tuition and could apply for full permanent residence if they pursue higher education or serve in the U.S. Armed Services.

The provisions of the DREAM Act were included in the comprehensive legislation the Senate considered in the spring of 2007. A slightly altered version of the bill, S.2205, was introduced on October 18, 2007. This stand-alone bill was blocked in the Senate by a procedural vote on October 24, 2007. The cloture vote was defeated 52-44-4, not meeting the necessary 3/5 requirement.

AJC supports the DREAM Act. In an October 25, 2007 statement following the failure of the bill, AJC said, “giving these students the opportunity to succeed not only benefits them but also allows their communities to flourish, levels the playing field for all children, enhances America’s rich, vibrant and diverse culture, and bolsters America’s role as a leader in the competitive global economy.”

Agricultural Jobs, Opportunity, Benefits and Security (Ag JOBS) Act	
<i>S.340 introduced January 18, 2007</i>	<i>H.R.371 introduced January 10, 2007</i>
<i>Diane Feinstein (D-CA)</i>	<i>Howard Berman (D-CA)</i>
<i>Larry Craig (R-ID)</i>	<i>Chris Cannon (R-UT)</i>
<i>29 cosponsors</i>	<i>55 cosponsors</i>
<i>Awaiting Committee Action</i>	<i>Awaiting Committee Action</i>
AJC supports the Agricultural Jobs, Opportunity, Benefits and Security Act.	

Well over half of the 1.6 million agricultural workers in the U.S. are not legally authorized to work in the United States. These workers often suffer economic exploitation, unsafe working conditions, and denial of civil rights, yet are afraid to defend themselves for fear of being deported.

The Agricultural Jobs, Opportunity, Benefits and Security (AgJOBS) Act would enable these workers to earn legal status through past and future agricultural work in the United States. Applicants would be required to pass a background check and meet stringent work and residency requirements. The proposal is endorsed by both farm workers and their agricultural employers, and enjoys broad bipartisan support.

AJC supports AgJOBS. Seasonal agricultural workers are highly vulnerable to economic exploitation and denial of their civil rights. This bill will place them on a path towards eligibility for earned legal status and citizenship.

SSI Extension for Elderly and Disabled Refugees Act	
<i>H.R.2608 introduced June 7, 2007</i>	<i>S.821 introduced March 8, 2007</i>
<i>Jim McDermott (D-WA)</i>	<i>Gordon Smith (R-OR)</i> <i>Herbert Kohl (D-WI)</i>
<i>15 Cosponsors</i>	<i>8 cosponsors</i>
<i>Passed the House July 11, 2007</i>	<i>Awaiting Committee Action</i>
AJC supports legislation alleviating hardships on elderly immigrants and refugees.	

Under current law, elderly or disabled refugees entering the country after August 22, 1996, are only eligible to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for seven years, a time period often too short for refugees to gain full citizenship, particularly since September 11, 2001. Approximately 12,000 humanitarian migrants have already lost their SSI benefits (and in some cases, the Medicaid coverage accompanying SSI), and the Social Security Administration projects that over 40,000 individuals will be cut off from SSI in the next six years. Elderly Jewish refugees from the former Soviet Union comprise a large number of those who have already been cut off and many more stand to lose their SSI benefits in the years ahead. The SSI Extension for Elderly and Disabled Refugees Act would extend refugees' eligibility from seven to nine years, through 2010.

AJC supports legislation to alleviate the hardships faced by elderly immigrants and refugees. AJC joins Jewish community leaders and other organizations across the country urging Congress to permanently restore SSI eligibility for refugees, noting that difficulty learning English hinders elderly refugees from attaining citizenship in time to secure essential SSI support.

HOMELAND SECURITY

Prohibition on Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment
<i>H.R.2082 introduced May 1, 2007</i> <i>Silvestre Reyes(D-TX)</i> <i>0 Cosponsors</i> <i>Failed to Override Veto on March 11, 2008</i>
AJC supports a prohibition on cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment.

At a time of looming threats to America’s national security, elected officials must ensure that the U.S. government has the necessary tools to confront the dangers of extremism in a fashion that respects human rights and civil liberties.

Section 327 of the Fiscal Year 2008 Intelligence Authorization Act strikes the appropriate balance by prohibiting the U.S. intelligence community from utilizing interrogation techniques not authorized by the Army Field Manual on Human Intelligence Collector Operations. The Army Field Manual includes a blanket prohibition on all “cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment,” and lists eight specific prohibited techniques, including waterboarding.

The House passed the intelligence bill, including section 327, on December 13, 2007. The Senate passed a companion bill on February 13, 2008. As he had promised, the President vetoed the bill on March 8, 2008, largely because of section 327. A few days later, on March 11, 2008, the House of Representatives attempted to override the veto, but failed by a vote of 225-118.

AJC supports applying the provision of the Army Field Manual relating to interrogation techniques to the entire American intelligence community. Section 327 would serve the interest of both keeping America secure and protecting human rights. In a February 12, 2008, letter to the Senate, AJC wrote that “the measure sends a powerful message regarding U.S. respect for the rule of law. In enacting Section 327, the Congress will honor our nation’s best traditions and serve to engender good will in the international community.” The letter went on to say that “this provision will serve to protect American servicemen and women abroad, should they fall into enemy hands, by reinforcing the moral authority of the United States to demand that they be treated humanely and in accordance with international law.”

Responsible Electronic Surveillance That is Overseen, Reviewed and Effective (RESTORE) Act	
<i>S.2248 introduced October 26, 2007</i>	<i>H.R.3773 introduced October 9, 2007</i>
<i>John Rockefeller (D-WV)</i>	<i>John Conyers (D-MI)</i>
<i>1 Cosponsors</i>	<i>7 Cosponsors</i>
<i>Passed the Senate February 12, 2008</i>	<i>Passed the House March 13, 2008</i>
AJC supports the “RESTORE” Act provisions, updating FISA, and enacting periodic review.	

The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), establishing a federal Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, was enacted in 1978 to balance the essential need to conduct foreign intelligence surveillance with the fundamental obligation to protect the rights to privacy and due process inherent in the Constitution. The FISA Court considers federal requests to wiretap or arrest spies, terrorists, and others suspected of working for

foreign governments. This specialized court reportedly has denied only one application of thousands of surveillance requests it has received.

Increased technological capabilities and globalization over the last thirty years have raised a series of issues that were previously unimaginable. In order to keep the FISA system current, Congress is now undertaking a comprehensive review. In August 2007, Congress passed the Protect America Act (P.L. 110-55), a short-term law expanding the authority of the Executive Branch to implement surveillance under certain circumstances without authorization or warrants from the FISA Court. The controversial law, passed 60-28 in the Senate and 227-183 in the House, included a sunset provision that set it to expire in February 2008.

In the meantime, both the Senate and House considered versions of legislation designed to overhaul FISA. On October 18, 2007, by a vote of 13-2, the Senate Intelligence Committee passed White House-supported legislation. The legislation offered retroactive legal immunity for telecommunications companies that cooperated with federal domestic surveillance efforts without the benefit of a FISA Court warrant. A month later, on November 15, 2007, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved its own FISA reform bill on a 10-9 party-line vote. The Judiciary Committee bill included additional judicial oversight while omitting the immunity provisions. The same day, the House passed its version of overhaul legislation under a veto threat from the White House. The Responsible Electronic Surveillance That is Overseen, Reviewed and Effective (RESTORE) Act included more stringent judicial review than the Protect America Act, did not include the retroactive immunity provision, and incorporated a provision sunsetting the law at the end of 2009.

In December 2007, the Senate tried to reconcile differences between the two committee-passed bills, but debate stalled, largely due to differences on retroactive immunity provision. On February 12, 2008, the Senate passed a bill that included the immunity and a six-year sunset. A month later, the House passed a reworked version of its original bill, still excluding the retroactive immunity provisions.

As the Senate and House worked to reconcile differences between these bills, AJC urged, in a February 25, 2008, letter, that domestic surveillance be compliant with the FISA provisions, and that Congress “pursue an approach that strikes the appropriate balance of protecting our national interests and preserving civil liberties.” In particular, AJC urged that the final bill “include provisions of the House-passed bill that mandate enhanced judicial review and oversight,” noting that the RESTORE Act “allows for the interception of domestic communications only with appropriate judicial supervision,... appropriately strengthen[s] the FISA court, ensure[s] American’s precious civil rights are maintained, and provide[s] the opportunity for necessary judicial review. At the same time, these provisions protect our national security by providing an effective means to obtain warrants, as well as allowing the Attorney General or the Director of National Intelligence to begin surveillance without judicial approval in specific emergency situations.”

ENERGY

America's reliance on foreign energy sources continues to threaten our national, environmental, and economic security. The United States consumes a quarter of the world's oil and uses more oil per capita than any other country in the world. Hundreds of billions of dollars leave the American economy each year in exchange for imported petroleum that supports regimes, such as Iran and Venezuela, that pose a strategic threat to America and the West. Moreover, petroleum usage is among the major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, viewed as a leading cause of climate change.

Bipartisan groups in the Senate and House, as well as the President, have said that reducing dependence on foreign oil is a primary concern. Yet, successive administrations have voiced similar sentiments for more than three decades, but our dependence has only grown. The past year saw significant progress as the 110th Congress passed important omnibus energy legislation while the President began to address the issue of climate change. Despite these steps, additional measures are necessary.

Among other effects, the Energy Independence and Security Act (H.R.6), signed into law by President Bush in December 2007, raises the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards for vehicles for the first time in more than two decades, mandates alternative fuel usage, and creates a grant program for joint U.S.-Israeli research on alternative energy sources.

An important provision not included in the comprehensive bill is a national Renewable Energy Standard (RES) that would require power utilities to obtain 15 percent of their electricity from homegrown, renewable energy sources by 2020. This measure would help reduce total greenhouse gas emissions and spur innovation and development in the green energy field.

Congress also took up legislation to extend existing renewable energy and efficiency tax credits. On April 10, 2008, the Senate approved a housing stimulus package (H.R.3221) that includes an amendment extending alternative energy tax credits. Later that day, the House also passed an extension of these credits, the Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation Tax Act of 2008 (H.R.5351). These provisions would expand support for renewable energy plants that rely on wind, solar, and biomass technologies, as well as extend tax breaks for the manufacture of efficient appliances and the construction of highly efficient residential and commercial buildings. A significant difference between the two bills is H.R.5351's inclusion of a provision repealing tax breaks for oil and natural gas producers and investing the revenue in tax incentives that would encourage production and use of renewable energy and energy conservation. The White House opposes the repeal provisions and has threatened to veto any legislation including such a repeal.

In the remaining part of the 110th Congress, both the Senate and the House are expected to consider legislation to address greenhouse gas emissions. Significant work

remains to be done on incentives for public transportation, increasing fuel conservation, and enhancing domestic oil production and nuclear capability with vigorous environmental safeguards.

The Energy Independence and Security Act	
<i>S.1419 introduced January 18, 2007</i>	<i>H.R.3221 introduced January 12, 2007</i>
<i>Harry Reid (D-NV)</i>	<i>Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)</i>
<i>No cosponsors</i>	<i>18 cosponsors</i>
<i>Final bill (H.R.6) Signed by President December 19, 2007</i>	
AJC supports The Energy Independence and Security Act.	

The Energy Independence and Security Act is comprehensive legislation aimed at moving the United States towards greater energy independence and security, increasing the production of clean renewable fuels, enhancing the efficiency of vehicles and buildings, and promoting research and development to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The bipartisan bill, drawing from comprehensive packages already pending in both chambers of Congress, was signed into law on December 19, 2007.

Among the bill’s key provisions is a historic increase in Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards for the first time in more than two decades. The legislation mandates that, all passenger cars—and, in a strengthening of a previous law, light trucks—increase efficiency to 35 mpg by 2020, up from the existing 27.5 mpg standard. The bill also authorizes a 36 billion gallon alternative fuel mandate by 2022, including a 21 billion gallon mark for advanced biofuels derived from biomass other than corn or sugar.

Other provisions of the bill support domestic development and production of more efficient vehicle technologies for the federal fleet, improvement in appliance and lighting standards, creation of up to three million new green collar jobs, investment in energy efficient technologies, buildings, and industry.

AJC strongly supports the Energy Independence and Security Act. In a December 12, 2007, letter to the Senate, AJC said that “strengthening CAFE standards is one of the most crucial components of a multifaceted approach to drastically reducing our dependence on foreign oil and securing America’s energy future.” The letter went on to call for the bill to be the “first step in a series of actions Congress will take to reduce this reliance.”

AJC Legislative Director and Counsel Richard T. Foltin represented AJC as President Bush signed the bill into law at the Department of Energy on December 19, 2007.

America's Climate Security Act of 2007	
<i>S.2191 introduced October 18, 2007</i>	
<i>Joseph Lieberman (I-CT)</i>	
<i>John Warner (R-VA)</i>	
<i>11 cosponsors</i>	<i>A House version of the bill is slated to be introduced.</i>
<i>Awaiting Floor Action</i>	
AJC supports efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.	

The bipartisan America's Climate Security Act of 2007 would mark the first Congressional action to limit greenhouse gas emissions. The legislation would reduce emissions by instituting a "cap-and-trade" system that allocates or auctions limited permits for emitting carbon-dioxide into the atmosphere and uses the revenue to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy. The cap-and-trade system would create a limit on carbon-dioxide emissions and would allow companies to buy and sell emission credits. By 2020, the bill would reduce emissions 15 percent compared to 2005 levels. An additional 55 percent reduction is expected by 2050.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee passed the bill on December 5, 2007. The bill is expected to be considered on the Senate floor beginning on June 2—albeit likely in amended form as Senator John Warner (R-VA) is expected to introduce a manager's package that can garner some Republican support. On the House side, a counterpart bill is in preparation under the leadership of House Energy and Commerce Chairman John Dingell (D-MI). However there are reports in some quarters of growing interest in holding off on climate change legislation until the next Congress and a new Administration.

AJC supports America's Climate Security Act in principle as a means to reduce dependence on foreign oil, secure America's economic and environmental health, and encourage many sectors of the economy, including the transportation sector, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Reducing Global Warming Pollution from Vehicles Act of 2008	
<i>S.2555 introduced January 24, 2008</i>	
<i>Barbara Boxer (D-CA)</i>	
<i>23 cosponsors</i>	
<i>Awaiting Committee Action</i>	
AJC supports the Reducing Global Warming Pollution Act.	

In December 2007, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rejected California's two-year-old request for a waiver that would allow the state to implement its law regulating tailpipe emissions from passenger cars and light trucks. The decision stated that California lacked a "compelling need" for the waiver. California Senator Barbara Boxer responded by introducing the Reducing Global Warming Pollution from Vehicles Act, legislation that would effectively overturn the EPA decision.

The California standards would take effect beginning in model year 2009 and would cut global warming emissions from new vehicles by nearly 30 percent by model year 2016. In California alone, these standards would be equivalent to taking 6.5 million cars off the road by the year 2020. In addition to California, 18 other states have enacted similar emissions standards, affecting roughly 45 percent of the U.S. population. If California is granted its waiver, these states will also be able to implement their own programs. Implementation of all of these plans would be equivalent to removing nearly 22 million vehicles from the roads. The multi-state impact would cut gasoline consumption by an estimated 11 billion gallons a year.

On January 2, 2008, in a separate action, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger (R-CA) and the State of California filed a lawsuit in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit seeking to overturn the EPA’s denial of the waiver.

AJC supports California’s request for a waiver and the legislative remedy. AJC will be filing an amicus brief in support of the state’s legal action. In an October 2007 letter to EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson, AJC wrote “we urge the EPA promptly to render an affirmative decision on California’s request, and thereby allow California to put into effect measures that will reduce our dependence on foreign oil, measures that are essential to this country’s security, and that will at the same time protect our environment and strengthen our economy.”

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Workplace Religious Freedom Act
<i>H.R.1431 introduced March 9, 2007 Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY) Mark Souder (R-IN) 26 cosponsors Awaiting Committee Action</i>
AJC supports the Workplace Religious Freedom Act.

American employees are all too often forced to choose between their faith and their livelihood. Statistics from the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission show that religious discrimination claims have steadily risen over the last decades. The bipartisan Workplace Religious Freedom Act (WRFA) would afford crucially needed protections to religiously observant employees. At the same time, the bill’s balancing test would respect the legitimate needs of businesses and the rights of other employees and third parties.

WRFA seeks to clarify a provision of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that requires employers to reasonably accommodate employees’ religious practices unless doing so would cause an undue hardship to the employer. Unfortunately, courts have

vitiating the protection against religious discrimination by finding, among other things, that anything more than a *de minimis* expense or difficulty constitutes an “undue hardship.” WRFA clarifies, in addition to addressing other concerns, that an expense or difficulty must be significant in order to be considered an “undue hardship,” ensuring that Title VII provides the protection that Congress intended.

AJC continues to play a leadership role in the WRFA coalition. On February 12, 2008, Richard T. Foltin, AJC’s Legislative Director and Counsel and co-chair of the coalition, testified in support of WRFA at a hearing of the House Education and Labor Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions.

In his testimony, Foltin stated that “enactment of the Workplace Religious Freedom Act will constitute an important step towards ensuring that all members of society, whatever their religious beliefs and practices, will be protected from an invidious form of discrimination. The refusal of an employer, absent undue hardship, to provide reasonable accommodation of a religious practice should be seen as—and was intended by Congress in 1972 to be treated as—a form of religious discrimination. And religious discrimination should be treated fully as seriously as any other form of discrimination that stands between Americans and equal employment opportunities.”

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
<i>SAMHSA reauthorizing legislation is slated to be introduced.</i>
AJC opposes charitable choice language included in existing SAMHSA authorization.

Legislation reauthorizing the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) would renew an important program designed to provide vital medical and social services. Unfortunately, “charitable choice” provisions included in the program since 2000 dramatically undermine critical protections of civil rights and religious liberty.

In order to protect powerful religious-liberty interests, religious organizations are exempt from a Title VII prohibition on considering religion as a factor when making employment decisions. However, provisions incorporated into SAMHSA in 2000 extend that exemption to cover federally-funded positions, even in the face of SAMHSA’s preexisting anti-discrimination provisions and local anti-discrimination laws. Other SAMHSA charitable-choice provisions are inconsistent with the principal of separation of church and state. SAMHSA is due for reauthorization.

SAMHSA was one of several social service programs with charitable-choice provisions enacted at about the same time. But attempts to insert similar language into additional social service programs failed in subsequent Congresses, albeit the conflict over these provisions often stalled vital reauthorization of federal programs. The logjam

was broken when, in early 2007, the House Education and Labor Committee voted down an amendment to legislation reauthorizing the Head Start early-childhood education program that would have rolled back vital civil rights protections by allowing faith-based providers to consider religion in hiring decisions with respect to publicly-funded Head Start personnel. Head Start reauthorization was subsequently passed by both chambers of Congress, with its civil rights protections intact, and was signed into law for the first time in nearly a decade on December 12, 2007.

Other bills to reauthorize existing social-service provisions—such as the Workforce Investment Act, the principal source of federal funding for training programs—may face similar efforts to roll back long-standing civil-rights protections. Efforts to reject charitable choice provisions, or at least to allow religious organizations to make employment decisions on the basis of religion, even in the context of federally-funded positions, were the chief reason neither Head Start nor the Workforce Investment program were reauthorized in the previous Congress.

AJC strongly opposes charitable choice as well as a roll-back of the civil rights provisions of social service programs. In a January 28, 2008, letter to the Senate, AJC called for SAMHSA to be reauthorized without the charitable choice language, saying that the existing provision “runs counter to fundamental civil rights principles” and going on to say that charitable choice amounts to government-funding of religion, places social service recipients in a position where they may face coercion to participate in religious activities in exchange for receiving assistance, and endangers the autonomy of religious organizations.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007	
<i>S.1105 introduced April 12, 2007</i> <i>Edward Kennedy (D-MA)</i> <i>Gordon Smith (R-OR)</i> <i>43 cosponsors</i> <i>Passed as amendment to DoD</i> <i>Authorization on Sept. 27, 2007.</i> <i>Omitted from DoD Conference Report.</i>	<i>H.R.1592 introduced March 20, 2007</i> <i>John Conyers (D-MI)</i> <i>Mark Kirk (R-IL)</i> <i>40 cosponsors</i> <i>Passed May 3, 2007</i>
AJC supports the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act.	

The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act would strengthen our law enforcement system by promoting increased cooperation between local, state, and federal authorities to ensure that hate crimes offenders are brought to justice. This legislation would help curb such incidents by broadening federal hate crimes laws—which already apply to cases where the defendant causes or attempts to cause injury based on the victim’s race, color, religion, or national origin—to cover crimes based on sexual orientation,

gender, gender identity or disability status. While states will continue to play the primary role in prosecuting violent hate crimes, this bill would better position federal officials to assist state and local authorities in responding to such offenses, and would amend federal law to facilitate the investigation and prosecution of violent, bias-motivated crimes.

Bipartisan majorities in both the Senate and the House support the language and have passed the measure multiple times since it was introduced in 1997. Most recently, the House passed the stand-alone bill in May 2007. Despite a veto threat from the Administration, the Senate passed the measure as an amendment to the Department of Defense Authorization bill on September 27, 2007. Ultimately, the conference report for the Department of Defense Authorization bill was passed, and enacted into law, in December 2007 without the hate crimes prevention language.

AJC strongly supports this hate crimes prevention legislation. In a November 27, 2007, letter to Congressional leadership, AJC wrote “hate crimes pose a serious threat to our nation’s security and the values upon which this country was founded.” The letter went on to say “this legislation would help curb such horrible crimes by broadening federal hate crimes law to cover cases in which the victim is targeted based on sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability status” and that “this bill would strengthen the efficacy of our law enforcement system by promoting increased cooperation between local, state and federal authorities to ensure that hate crimes offenders are brought to justice.”

Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)
<i>H.R.2015 introduced April 24, 2007</i> <i>Barney Frank (D-MA)</i> <i>Deborah Pryce (R-OH)</i> <i>173 cosponsors</i> <i>Passed as H.R.3685 on November 7, 2007</i>
AJC supports the Employment Non-Discrimination Act.

The Employment Non-Discrimination Act would provide basic protection against workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation, a protection not included in current federal law. The bill exempts small businesses, military, and, as originally introduced, pervasively religious organizations and inherently religious positions at religiously-affiliated organizations, from these regulations. As passed, ENDA’s exemption for religious organizations was expanded to make ENDA inapplicable to “a corporation, association, educational institution, or society that is exempt from the religious discrimination provisions of title VII” of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The passed version also omitted H.R.2015’s explicit extension of its protections to transgendered people.

AJC supports ENDA, important legislation that extends the legal protections from employment discrimination provided to other individuals who have historically been denied equal employment opportunities. In a November 7, 2007, letter to the House, AJC wrote that “this legislation represents a major step forward

in the advancement of civil rights protections for all Americans, and would build on similar enactments at the state and local levels,” and that the bill’s exemption of religious organizations from its coverage provides an important protection for religious liberty—an area of central importance to the American Jewish Committee. “Under ENDA, no religious institution would be required to violate the religious precepts on which it is founded.” AJC’s letter also noted that it does not explicitly encompass discrimination on the basis of gender identity, and ENDA was “not as inclusive as it might be.”

District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2007	
<i>S.1257 introduced May 1, 2007</i>	<i>H.R.328 introduced January 9, 2007</i>
<i>Joseph Lieberman (I-CT)</i>	<i>Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC)</i>
<i>Robert Bennett (R-UT)</i>	<i>Tom Davis (R-VA)</i>
<i>19 Cosponsors</i>	<i>23 cosponsors</i>
<i>Awaiting Floor Action</i>	<i>Passed as H.R.1905 on April 19,2007</i>
AJC supports the District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2007.	

America remains the only democratic nation where the citizens of the capital city lack voting representation in the national legislature. The D.C. House Voting Rights Act of 2007 aims to end the continued disenfranchisement of District of Columbia’s citizens from any voting representation in the United States Congress.

Under the bill, the District of Columbia would be represented by one permanent seat in the House of Representatives. To make the legislation “vote-neutral,” the bill would also grant an additional House seat to Utah, which fell a mere 84 residents short of gaining another seat following the 2000 census reapportionment.

The House version, the Equal House Voting Rights Act passed on April 19, 2007. The Senate companion measure, introduced shortly thereafter, was approved by the Homeland Security and Government Affairs and moved to the Senate floor where, despite majority bipartisan support, the bill stalled in a legislative logjam when it failed to receive the necessary 60 votes to limit debate.

AJC supports granting the District of Columbia voting representation in the House of Representatives and rectifying the disenfranchisement of over half a million citizens. The District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2007 is an opportunity to pursue a sensible, fair, and politically balanced resolution to a centuries-old issue. In the spring of 2008, AJC spearheaded a letter from the faith community urging Senators to guarantee voting rights to all Americans by supporting this important bill.

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