

Jewish Insider, 09/19/25

Seven Senate Dems call for recognition of a Palestinian state

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A group of seven Senate Democrats introduced a resolution on Thursday calling for the U.S. to unilaterally recognize a Palestinian state.

The resolution was led by Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and co-sponsored by Sens. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Peter Welch (D-VT), Tina Smith (D-MN), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Mazie Hirono (D-HI).

The resolution came in conjunction with plans by several U.S. allies to recognize a Palestinian state and alongside a similar push from progressive House lawmakers. Merkley and Van Hollen recently traveled

to Israel and released a scathing report accusing Israel of deliberate ethnic cleansing and collective punishment.

“Recognition of a Palestinian state is not only a practical step the United States can take to help build a future where Palestinians and Israelis can live in freedom, dignity, and security, but it is the right thing to do. America has a responsibility to lead, and the time to act is now,” Merkley said in a statement.

“The goal of a Palestinian state can’t be put off any longer if we want the next generation to avoid suffering from the same insecurity and affliction.”

The resolution’s sponsors claimed that it constitutes a reaffirmation of long-standing U.S. support for a two-state solution.

The legislation highlights that “administrations of both political parties in the United States have long affirmed that a negotiated two-state solution is the only viable path to an enduring peace in the region” — but does not acknowledge that policymakers have traditionally seen unilateral recognition as contrary to that principle of a solution negotiated between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Kaine said that the Israeli government’s rejection of a two-state solution should cause the U.S. to change its own policies.

“Since July 2024 when the Israeli Knesset voted to deny a path to Palestinian statehood and made clear that Israel would not accept Palestinian autonomy, I have believed the U.S. should no longer condition recognition on Israeli assent but rather on Palestinian willingness to live in peace with its neighbors,”

Kaine said. “We must redouble our efforts to work toward a future where Israelis and Palestinians alike can live in peace, security, and dignity.”

Welch said in a statement that “recognizing a two-state solution is long overdue and the only way forward — something Republican and Democratic Administrations have agreed on for decade. ... This resolution signals Congress’ continued commitment for an enduring two-state solution for peace for the people of Israel and Palestine.”

Though the U.S. has supported a two-state solution, no previous administration has backed unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state.

Van Hollen said in a statement that Congress should assert its own stance on the issue because “the Netanyahu government has obstructed that goal [of a two-state solution] and the Trump Administration has abandoned it.”

The resolution condemns the Hamas attacks on Oct. 7 and the group’s rejection of Israel’s right to exist and calls for Palestinian elections, as well as noting that some Arab states have conditioned normalization with Israel on a path to a Palestinian state.

“Failure to advance a two-state solution risks entrenching an unacceptable permanent occupation, further destabilizing the region, and undermining United States interests and values,” the legislation states.

It calls on Hamas to surrender and release the hostages and on Israel to end the war in Gaza.

J Street supported the resolution.