
Thursday, March 9, 2017

BUSINESS MEETING

U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
115TH CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

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U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
WASHINGTON, DC.

1 The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:32 a.m. in, Room 419, Dirksen
2 Senate Office Building, Hon. Bob Corker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

3 Present: Senators Corker [presiding], Risch, Rubio, Johnson, Flake, Gardner,
4 Young, Barrasso, Portman, Paul, Cardin, Menendez, Shaheen, Coons, Udall, Murphy,
5 Kaine, Markey, Merkley, and Booker.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BOB CORKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM TENNESSEE

6 **THE CHAIRMAN.** We are going to need everybody here to actually start our
7 business meeting, so I think what we will do, now that we have eight members here, is
8 go ahead and start the business meeting. So I am calling that to order.

9 And what we may do is recess for a moment and move to the other hearing, and
10 move back to this once we have the appropriate number of members here, just to
11 accommodate everybody's time.

12 The business meeting of the Foreign Relations Committee, as I mentioned, has
13 come to order. Today, we will consider the nomination of David Friedman to be the
14 next U.S. Ambassador to Israel.

1 Israel is our closest friend and strongest partner in the region, and this position is
2 a vital post. Mr. Friedman is an impassioned advocate for America and for
3 strengthening the mutually beneficial bond between the United States and Israel. He
4 understands the complexity of issues at stake for the United States, and the necessity to
5 support a democratic ally in an important and unstable part of the world.

6 We can all appreciate the sincere desire of the President for a renewed attempt at
7 lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians. To represent the United States and
8 facilitate that effort, the President needs an Ambassador who shares his vision and
9 confidence.

10 Mr. Friedman is under no illusions about the difficulty of the task at hand, and I
11 believe he views this opportunity as a calling and will put his full energy behind service
12 to our Nation and our interests in Israel.

13 With that, I would like to recognize the distinguished ranking member, and my
14 friend, Ben Cardin.

**STATEMENT OF HON. BEN CARDIN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MARYLAND**

15 **SENATOR CARDIN.** Mr. Chairman, first, I want to thank you for the manner in
16 which this nomination was handled, the time that we were given to get the information
17 we needed, the courtesies extended during the hearing process, and a thorough vetting
18 of Mr. Friedman. So I appreciate that very much.

1 And I also appreciate Mr. Friedman's willingness to serve our country in this
2 critically important role. And I will acknowledge the comments he made during our
3 confirmation hearing, his apologetic comments about the statements that he had
4 published, were encouraging.

5 The United States and Israel have a special relationship. That special
6 relationship goes back to 1948 when President Truman recognized the state of Israel -- I
7 might tell you against some of the advice within his own State Department. And ever
8 since that time, successive administrations have supported the relationship between
9 Israel and the United States because they know it is critically important to U.S. national
10 security as well as Israel's security.

11 We have a country that shares our values. We have a country that is reliable as
12 far as intelligence information, and will be with us in any circumstance.

13 That special relationship has been supported not just by successive
14 administrations but by every Congress -- by Democrats, Republicans, by the House, the
15 Senate. And to me, it is extremely important that we continue that united support.

16 Overwhelming numbers of Members in Congress understand and support the
17 special relationship between the United States and Israel on both sides of the aisle. But
18 there are those who are trying to divide us and make Israel a partisan political issue. To
19 me, that should have no place in American politics, because of the importance of the
20 relationship.

1 I do not believe that Mr. Friedman can be that unifying person as Ambassador to
2 Israel that will unify the support in our country and our political process with Israel. I
3 say that because of his written comments, and I believe that will come back to be used.

4 The second concern I have, and why I will not support his nomination, is the
5 written statements related to the two-state solution, in that he believes there can be
6 peace between the Israelis and Palestinians absent a two-state process where you have a
7 Jewish state and a Palestinian state living side-by-side with security and peace.

8 So for those reasons, I will not be supporting this nomination.

9 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Would anyone else like to speak to the nomination?

10 Senator Kaine?

11 **SENATOR KAINE.** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

12 I will also oppose the nomination. I think Mr. Friedman -- it is regrettable,
13 because he knows so much about the topic. But the relationship between the United
14 States and Israel is deeply important and the region is incredibly volatile. The last thing
15 we need in this position is somebody who has a penchant for over-the-top hyperbolic
16 and even false statements.

17 And Mr. Friedman, sadly, has not demonstrated the ability, in my view, to be
18 diplomatic. We use the phrase "diplomatic" to convey something -- discretion and
19 judgment.

1 Scurrilous and sometimes even false statements about the President of the
2 United States, about members of this body, about other patriotic Americans with whom
3 he disagrees, and has the right to disagree, those demonstrate to me that there would be
4 a volatility to his holding this position that is exactly the wrong ingredient to put into
5 this important relationship in this region of the world.

6 For that reason, I will oppose him as well. Thank you.

7 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Any other comments?

8 Senator Udall?

9 **SENATOR UDALL.** Mr. Chairman, I agree with the ranking member in his
10 position, and also what has been said by Senator Kaine.

11 One other thing, and I think we debated this in depth, that I would just point out
12 and reiterate, is that we had five Ambassadors, Democrat and Republican under
13 different administrations, weigh in on this. And the crux of their statement: We believe
14 him to be unqualified for this position.

15 So I think it is unprecedented to see people of this stature weigh in, and I think
16 we should remember that these comments were not comments off-the-cuff. They were
17 written. They were op-eds. They were drafted.

18 So I think we are in a far different situation than just having off-the-cuff
19 comments.

20 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

1 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Thank you so much.

2 Would anyone else like to speak?

3 Because of the committee rules, what I am going to do is recess the business
4 meeting into the hearing until we have the remainder of participants here, so we can go
5 ahead and vote.

6 I hope that happens very quickly. I know some of you have other business and
7 some will plan to stay for the hearing.

8 So if it is all right with you, Mr. Ranking Member, what I will do is recess the
9 business meeting.

10 **SENATOR CARDIN.** Could we just ask at the offices of those that we expect to
11 be here be called so that we can get a quorum as quickly as possible?

12 **THE CHAIRMAN.** I think we have some panic-stricken staff who have already
13 done that, so thank you.

14 **SENATOR SHAHEEN.** Mr. Chairman?

15 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Yes, ma'am?

16 **SENATOR SHAHEEN.** Is there not a quorum present yet? Perhaps you should
17 explain that, because I think a lot of people do not understand that.

18 **THE CHAIRMAN.** When a nomination is being voted out, you cannot use a proxy
19 to establish the majority of voters here. You have to have everyone present, so thank
20 you for asking.

1 And I think that the other members will be here shortly. We will wrap back in
2 and move the nominee out.

3 Senator Isakson, I think you all know, is still away because of the ailment that he
4 has had.

5 [Recess.]

6 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The briefest opening comments ever.

7 **SENATOR RUBIO.** I like a dramatic entrance.

8 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Our member from Florida always seeking the spotlight.

9 [Laughter.]

10 **THE CHAIRMAN.** With that, does anyone seek a roll call vote?

11 **SENATOR CARDIN.** I think we should have a roll call vote.

12 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The question is on the nominee for Ambassador to Israel.

13 Clerk, if you would, please call the roll.

14 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Risch?

15 **SENATOR RISCH.** Aye.

16 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Rubio?

17 **SENATOR RUBIO.** Aye.

18 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Johnson?

19 **SENATOR JOHNSON.** Aye.

20 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Flake?

1 **SENATOR FLAKE.** Aye.

2 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Gardner?

3 **SENATOR GARDNER.** Aye.

4 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Young?

5 **SENATOR YOUNG.** Aye.

6 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Barrasso?

7 **SENATOR BARRASSO.** Aye.

8 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Isakson?

9 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Aye by proxy.

10 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Portman?

11 **SENATOR PORTMAN.** Aye.

12 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Paul?

13 **SENATOR PAUL.** Aye.

14 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Cardin?

15 **SENATOR CARDIN.** No.

16 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Menendez?

17 **SENATOR MENENDEZ.** Aye.

18 **THE CLERK.** Ms. Shaheen?

19 **SENATOR SHAHEEN.** No.

20 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Coons?

1 **SENATOR COONS.** No.

2 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Udall?

3 **SENATOR UDALL.** No.

4 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Murphy?

5 **SENATOR MURPHY.** No.

6 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Kaine?

7 **SENATOR KAINE.** No.

8 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Markey?

9 **SENATOR MARKEY.** No.

10 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Merkley?

11 **SENATOR MERKLEY.** No.

12 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Booker?

13 **SENATOR BOOKER.** No.

14 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Chairman?

15 **THE CHAIRMAN.** Aye.

16 The clerk will report.

17 **THE CLERK.** Mr. Chairman, the yeas are 12; the nays are 9.

18 **THE CHAIRMAN.** The nominee will be reported to the floor.

1 I thank all of you very much for being here. I know we have differing points of
2 view here, but thank you all very much for cooperating and causing this to be a
3 successful business meeting.

4 And with that, the business meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:42 a.m., the meeting was adjourned.]