



# Republican Jewish Coalition

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December 15, 2005

Dear Rabbi Saperstein:

Let me begin by thanking you for the thoughtful attention you have given our ad and for your interest in engaging in a debate on our policy regarding Iraq. Despite our different perspectives over the war we both share a commitment to the Jewish people.

However, I do wish to address the following points raised in your letter. You asked several times that I consider the full resolution rather than "one line from a press release." Our ad was not intended as a response to the resolution. Rather, it was a direct response to the comments and pronouncement expressed in the URJ's press release, in which Rabbi Yoffie made this presumptuous and flawed statement:

*"The sentiment was clear and overwhelming. American Jews and all Americans are profoundly critical of this War."*

**So now I ask you, do you continue to stand by the words of Rabbi Yoffie? Or, are you saying that Rabbi Yoffie misspoke? If so, the URJ should release a statement to clarify this and offer an apology.**

Since you repeatedly referenced the URJ resolution on Iraq, I want to take the opportunity to raise with you an issue that troubles me greatly and should be equally concerning to you. The resolution expresses solidarity with the "Win Without War" coalition and highlights some of the "many mainstream American organizations" which are members of that group, including the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church General Board of Church and Society (UMC).

Since you took the time to denounce groups like ANSWER and United for Peace and Justice, which are known for their anti-Israel positions, I thought I would point out that the UMC has formally stated its opposition to the "continued military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, the confiscation of Palestinian land and water resources [and] the destruction of Palestinian homes." In addition, according to the UMC web site, the church's New England and Virginia Conferences have called for divestment of companies that support the "Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories."

And, with regard to the United Church of Christ, let me take this opportunity to point out that at their 25th General Synod they passed a resolution regarding Israel's security barrier that "calls upon the Israeli government to cease the project to construct the barrier, tear down the segments that have already been constructed and make reparations to those who have lost homes, fields, property and/or lives and health due to the barrier..."

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**Perhaps you were not aware of these positions. But now that you are, are you still comfortable with the URJ calling them “mainstream organizations” and aligning the Reform movement with them?**

Let me conclude by responding to the point in your letter questioning where we could get the idea that Reform Judaism does not believe that “Freedom is Worth Fighting For.” Let me direct your attention again to the URJ press release of November 18th in which you highlight a statement by Dr. Michael Rankin that says, “This is not a just war.” We strongly beg to differ and so, may I add, will the millions of Iraqis who are risking their lives as I write this, simply by exercising their newly obtained freedom and the right to vote and choose their leaders.

It is absolutely inconsistent to argue that the freedom and democratization that we are fighting for in Iraq is an unjust war and then try to make the case, as you did in your letter to me, that the URJ does in fact believe that “Freedom is Worth Fighting For.” Sorry, Rabbi Saperstein, but you simply cannot have it both ways. Where does the URJ really stand? If you don’t agree with the comments in your press release that this is an unjust war, then clarify that publicly and offer an apology. If in fact you still maintain that this is an unjust war, then don’t be offended by the message raised in our ad.

Rabbi Saperstein, reasonable people can differ on matters of public policy and a healthy debate on these issues within our community is vital. It is important, however, that organizations such as the URJ respect this diversity of opinion on the major issues of the day and refrain from claiming to speak out on behalf of an entire group. We strongly stand by the substance and message of our ads to counter the statements put forth by the URJ. Do you and the URJ still stand by Rabbi Yoffie’s and Dr. Rankin’s comments? If so, I’m interested in how you explain them in the context of this exchange, as well as the comments in the letter to me where you state that the URJ recognizes that they don’t speak for all American Jews.

Thank you in advance for thoughtfully considering our views.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Brooks". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Matthew Brooks  
Executive Director