



AIPAC's Singular Ability to Remove Members of Congress

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): It's long been discussed and talked about that one of the most powerful lobbying groups in Washington is AIPAC, and the pro-Israel lobby in general. Now there are a lot of other powerful lobbies, lobbying has become almost entirely legalised without limits. We have lobbies for Wall Street and Big Pharma and Big Tech and all sorts of other components of our economy. We have activist groups that are quite powerful, like the NRA and Planned Parenthood. But you could definitely make the case that AIPAC, not just is one of the most powerful, but is the single most powerful because it has the ability to do things that even those other extraordinarily well-funded lobbies have not proven they can do, which is to simply remove members of Congress at a rate incomparable to any other lobby. Anytime they see a member of Congress insufficiently supporting or expressing loyalty to the State of Israel, and they've been doing that over and over, and there is currently a primary challenge that is now taking place in New York's 16 congressional district, targeting Congressman Jamaal Bowman, who oftentimes is very supportive of Israel, oftentimes has voted to fund their Iron Dome to send money to Israel, but occasionally he criticises Israel and that is a grave violation from the perspective of AIPAC and they are now targeting him in a way that they have done repeatedly in the past to remove members of Congress. And what makes that so notable is that one of the most difficult things to do in politics is to defeat an incumbent member of Congress. In last cycles, races will show you 100% of senators up for re-election won their seats, and oftentimes it's close to 95%/ 96%, which is the rate of re-election for incumbent members of the House. The entire system is built as an incumbent protection racket, so that it is almost impossible to remove them and yet, AIPAC is the one group that seems to have figured out exactly how to do that. And they've been doing it for many, many years and members of Congress know that one of the groups, in fact, the group that you definitely do not want to alienate is AIPAC, precisely because of their demonstrated ability to remove people from Congress.

Now, here from Open Secret, which is a site that provides transparency on funding and the like from October of 2023, there you see those statistics: *Incumbent politicians enjoy record reelection in an ageing Congress*. Quote, "In the 2022 elections each of the 28 incumbent

U.S. senators seeking reelection came home with a win. Incumbent House members boasted a similar level of job security, retaining their seats and 94% of races". And what's so amazing about that is polls constantly show that Americans hate Congress. They hold that institution in contempt. But the system is designed and obviously it's designed by these incumbents, so they're self-interested, and they designed the system to essentially give them life tenure. So it's a democracy in name, but you basically these people, once they get into Congress, are barely ever removed unless you alienate AIPAC and then you have a very good chance of losing your job permanently in Washington. Here is the statistics on what's happening in Jamaal Bowman's district, which is the New York 16th congressional district from Adimpact Politics, which says, "NY 16 primary is one week away: It has seen over \$23 million in spending and reservations, making it the most expensive House primary ever". Now, why would this one House congressional district, and not even between a Republican and Democrat, between two Democrats, to see who gets the nomination, there's one district, that of 435, attracts such massive amounts of spending? The tweet says: Here's an updated look at top spending advertisers. As an AIPAC affiliated group, the United Democracy Project makes up 61% of total spending. And there you see on screen that this one PAC, the United Democracy PAC, has spent \$14 million. Just from AIPAC and the pro-Israel lobby, all of which has gone either to negative ads against Jamaal Bowman or much less commonly, positive ads in favour of George Latimer. Because obviously, the idea is that no one's going to love George Latimer, the idea is to make the members of the voters in this district hate Jamaal Bowman. And on top of that, you see that George Latimer has donated 2.5 million himself – or those are his other donors, his campaign. And then you have this \$2.1 million of an entity called Fairshake, which is also targeting Jamaal Bowman, even though they're not a pro-Israel group. They have been running ads that focus on Jamaal Bowman's abandonment, in their words, of Israel.

So you have this massive, gigantic sum of money in this race. The vast, vast majority of which is dedicated to removing Jamaal Bowman from Congress. And there's only one reason why that's happening, and that is because he sometimes criticises Israel. Not always, but sometimes. And that alone is enough. Now, AIPAC has a remarkable record of success, as we've shown you many times, every time there's some AIPAC sponsored resolution or even proposed law that AIPAC lobbyists write, it not only automatically passes the House or the Senate, it does so with a close to unanimous vote. There's almost no issue that commands a close to unanimous vote in our very polarised political system. The one that does is Israel. Because of the fear that AIPAC has put into the hearts and minds of members of Congress, and for good reason, because they have been so successful, so singularly successful in removing people from Congress, and it looks as though they are going to be successful in this race as well. Here from Emerson polling on June 11th, so, just last week. There you see the poll: *George Latimer Leads Jamaal Bowman, 48 to 31%*. And here you see the graphic of the poll on screen, which is, the question is: If the primary election for Congress were held today for whom would you vote? George Latimer 48%. Jamaal Bowman 31%. Undecided 21%. So although 21% say they're undecided, the gap between George Latimer and Jamaal Bowman is 17%. So unless almost every one of those undecided candidates voted for Jamaal Bowman between now and the election, it means that Bowman is likely to lose and not just lose, but

lose by a vast margin. And again, it is extremely rare for an incumbent to lose their race. Even rarer for an incumbent to be challenged and to lose his primary. It's not unheard of, in fact, Jamaal Bowman himself became a member of Congress back in 2020 when he challenged the long time House member, the extremely pro-Israel Eliot Engle. That's how Jamaal Bowman won. He had a huge number of small donors who were basically part of the progressive wing of the Democratic Party who seek to make it more progressive. And he was able to not just outspend, but even to be able to get enough voters on his side to win. But in general, it's extremely difficult to remove House members, let alone by a margin of this size. And yet AIPAC looks well on their way to doing so. Now, the amazing thing about what AIPAC does when they target a person in Congress solely because of the one issue they care about, which is Israel, is that when they run ads and flood the district or the state with negative ads against the incumbent who they want to remove solely because of Israel, they don't actually even mention Israel in their ads. They know that most people are not single issue voters the way AIPAC is, and that they care about things other than this foreign government on the other side of the world. And so what they do is they run ads that are deceitful in the sense that they pretend they're targeting Jamaal Bowman for all sorts of other things unrelated to Israel, and they barely ever mention Israel itself. So here is one of the ads that is most circulating in this district. It is from the United Democracy Project, which is the pro-Israel, AIPAC funded PAC that is targeting Jamaal Bowman. And this is the kind of ad that is running in his district.

Ad: Jamaal Bowman has his own agenda and refuses to compromise even with President Biden. Bowman voted against the President's Infrastructure Act, against rebuilding roads and bridges in New York, against replacing lead pipes, and Jamaal Bowman voted against President Biden's Debt Limit Deal, putting Social Security and Medicare payments at risk, along with our entire economy. Jamaal Bowman has his own agenda, and he's hurting New York. UDP is responsible for the content of this ad.

GG: Not a word about Israel, just basically alleging that somehow Jamaal Bowman is a threat to social programs like Social Security and accusing him of being insufficiently loyal to the Democratic Party agenda, as though AIPAC cares anyway about Joe Biden's agenda. And so it really is a very deceitful dynamic where you have a pro-Israel group targeting Jamaal Bowman solely because of his stance on Israel, while the voters in his district believe that the grievances against Jamaal Bowman have nothing to do with Israel and in fact have everything to do instead with all sorts of other issues relating to loyalty to the Democratic Party and Joe Biden. Now, the amazing thing about all of this is that Jamaal Bowman is hardly some obsessively anti-Israel, let alone anti-Semitic, member of Congress. In fact, he is often alienated. The precise groups on the left that helped him become a member of Congress and that support him, including the Democratic Socialists for America, because they believe that he is too pro-Israel, that he has voted too often to send money to Israel, to fund Israel, to defend Israel to the point where they were willing, even actively considering expelling him from those organisations and refusing to endorse him any longer.

Here, from the Institute for Palestine Studies in April of 2022: *DSA, Jamaal Bowman and the BDS Working Group*. The BDS Working Group is the working group inside the Democratic Socialists of America who advocate for BDS, which is the boycott, divestment, sanctions movement against Israel. And this headline is showing the strains between the left wing members of the Democratic Party that helped put Jamaal Bowman in office and Bowman himself, because of his, in their view, excessive support for Israel. Quote, "Issues with Rep. Jamaal Bowman, who is endorsed by DSA, started at the end of September 2021, when he voted in support of an additional \$1 billion in U.S. aid to Israel's Iron Dome. At the time, DSA made an official statement condemning this vote, declaring that they, quote, 'unapologetically stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their ongoing struggle for liberation', as well as reaffirming their support for the boycott divestment movement. In November of 2021, Rep. Bowman travelled to Palestine on a visit sponsored by J Street, a Zionist lobbying group". Sort of J Street was intended to be the softer version of AIPAC. "DSA noted that they were aware of Rep. Bowman's trip and were actively working with the BDS Working Group to address that issue. BDS guidelines state that, quote, 'Visits by politicians and parliamentarians to Israel that are organised by Israel lobby groups, including AIPAC and J Street, cross our non-violent BDS picket line and harm our struggle for freedom, justice and equality". So Jamaal Bowman has been doing all sorts of things in favour of Israel, that are pro-Israel, that have alienated many of his anti-Israel left wing supporters. But that's not enough for AIPAC. AIPAC demands full and total support and loyalty toward Israel. Even if you occasionally criticise them, that makes you a target. Now, in defence of this idea that Bowman is anti-Israel, it is true that since October 7th, like the majority of the world, he has been harshly critical of the Israeli destruction of Gaza and the killing of civilians. But it hardly means he is some fanatical anti-Israel critic, as I just demonstrated.

Here from the New York Times on June 10th of this year: *Jamaal Bowman Makes Amends With Democratic Socialists After Rift Over Israel*. Quote, "Representative Jamaal Bowman of New York told members of the socialist group that his views on Israel are aligned with theirs and insisted that he never quit the group, despite earlier claims." He had actually said, Jamaal Bowman did, that he was removing himself from DSA because he was offended by many of their more extreme anti-Israel views. "Last fall, in the days after Hamas's deadly October 7th attack on Israel, Congressman Bowman of New York appeared ready to make a hard public break with the Democratic Socialists of America". The DSA is actually quite influential and powerful in New York City politics, which is where Jamaal Bowman is coming from, in that New York City area, including Long island, Westchester. And so if you split with the DSA as he was threatening to do over Israel, that actually can matter to an incumbent's chances. Quote, "Mr. Bowman condemned a rally promoted by DSA, quote, 'in the strongest possible terms' after some attendees glorified the slaughter of 1200 Israelis. His office also took the opportunity to publicise for the first time that he had let his own DSA membership lapse amid earlier disagreements over funding for Israeli defences." So he was playing up the fact that so many people on the left were angry at him over his support for Israel and the US funding of the Iron Dome. And so you see this kind of history of him being sufficiently pro-Israel to

alienate his most important and active supporters on the left. But again, any criticism of Israel will provoke AIPAC to target you and try and remove you from Congress.

Here from the Guardian in July of 2022. Quote: *Pro-Israel group pour millions of dollars into the primary campaign to defeat Jewish candidate.* "AIPAC says, Democrat Andy Levin, a self-described Zionist" – a Jewish Zionist in Congress – "is insufficiently pro-Israel – alarming some because of how much of the money comes from wealthy Trump donors". Quote, "Levin has been stung by the largest pro-Israel lobbying groups campaign to paint him as an enemy of the Jewish state because he has spoken up for the Palestinians. AIPAC has spent more than \$4 million to defeat Levin in next Tuesday's Democratic primary for congressional seat in northwestern Detroit, with a twin strategy to discredit him with the city's sizable Jewish community while funding an advertising blitz aimed at the wider electorate that avoids mention of the Israel lobby's involvement. Just as we showed you that ad, they'll target Jewish voters by saying he's bad on Israel, even though he's a Jewish Zionist, but then they will target the rest of the electorate that doesn't prioritise Israel the way they do, and pretend that they're angry that he's off the reservation on the Democratic Party's or Joe Biden's agenda. Quote, "AIPAC boasts that its favoured candidates have won and nine of the ten Democratic primaries it waded into in recent months. Hardline pro-Israel groups have proclaimed these victories as evidence of American voters' support for its positions. But the campaigns, funded through AIPAC's political action committee, the United Democracy Project, rarely mentions the Jewish state or Israel policy on Israel". They just flood so much money, an incomparable amount of money, into trying to destroy the reputations of political careers, of anyone who steps even a little bit out of line when it comes to Israel. And they boast themselves of how successful they have been in defeating the candidates whom they target in a country where the re-election rates for incumbents, as we showed you, are approaching 100%.

Here from The Guardian in July of 2022, is highlighting another case where AIPAC destroyed a Democratic incumbent. Quote, *AIPAC hails Democrat's defeat for not being sufficiently pro-Israel.* "Donna Edwards, the leading contender in the Maryland primary for a safe seat, lost after pro-Israeli groups poured millions to block her". And that Donna Edwards had been a member of Congress representing that district in the past. Quote, "Edwards defeat will be taken as a warning by other Democratic contenders not to criticise Israeli policies, or risk a well-funded campaign against them. AIPAC and its allies spent nearly \$7 million through political action committees to block Edwards, who served eight years as the first Black woman elected to Congress from Maryland before losing a bid for the Senate in 2016". These are insane amounts of money, insane numbers to be pouring into, not a Senate race, not a presidential race, but simply to defeat a single House member in a primary for their own party's nomination. And obviously one of the main reasons they want to spend so much money is not only to remove that particular, insufficiently pro-Israel member of Congress, but to frighten and deter and scare every other member of Congress to understand that if they don't stay in line on Israel the one thing that might jeopardise their future political career and their almost guaranteed re-election will happen; namely, that AIPAC will pour so much money into their district to try and ruin their reputation that they will remove them from

Congress permanently, like they have done with so many other members of Congress in the past. They also had success earlier this year with destroying the political career of a Republican member of Congress, who they claimed was anti-Israel.

From The Times of Israel in May of 2024: *Longtime Israel critic loses Indiana Republican House primary*. Quote, "Republican Jewish Coalition and AIPAC had mounted a campaign against John Hostetler, who was soundly beaten by the Republican Jewish Committee's favourite candidate, Mark Messmer". Quote, "The former Republican congressman in Indiana, who is a longtime critic of Israel, failed in his bid to return to the House of Representatives after the Republican Jewish Coalition and AIPAC mounted an effort to support his opponent. Election returns in Indiana's 8th district on Tuesday night showed state Senator Mark Messmer, the RJC's favourite candidate, soundly defeating John Hostetler, who represented the district in Congress from 1995-2007". 'Tonight, we succeeded in keeping a vocal anti-Israel candidate at the Republican conference', the RJC said Tuesday evening. 'This is a major victory for the RJC, the Jewish community and for all pro-Israel Americans and for common sense.' Common sense, meaning make sure to always pay for Israel's military finance, all of its new wars, sacrifice American standing in the world in defence of this one foreign country, even isolating itself from the rest of the world to do so. Quote, "The RJC has spent nearly \$1 million on ads in the district, mostly promoting Messmer, said Sam Markstein, a spokesman for the group."

Now, if you're a member of Congress and you see all of this happening and what you want, which is what most members of Congress want, is to stay in Congress and continuously get re-elected, obviously, you're going to have immense fear. In fact, more fear than any other of offending this one particular lobby, a lobby that is devoted not to the interests of the United States, but to the foreign country called Israel on the other side of the world. That is the one issue that members of the American Congress know they cannot deviate from. Less they risk, in a singularly, significant way, their ability to get re-elected.

Here from the Guardian in August of 2002, which is 22 years ago, just to say how long this has been going on. You see the headline: *Pro-Palestinian congresswoman ousted*. Quote, "One of the most controversial figures in the US Congress, Cynthia McKinney, was effectively booted out of Washington yesterday when she lost a primary for re-election in her home state of Georgia after a bitter campaign that focussed heavily on her support for Palestinian causes. After 10 years in the House of Representatives – she had been elected and re-elected five times – "Ms. McKinney lost the nomination for her safe Democratic seat in Atlanta in a race that focussed on the Middle East, and her allegation that President George Bush had advanced knowledge of the September 11th attacks. Her conqueror, Denise Majette, a state judge, is also black and female, but she is a more mainstream politician and a far less abrasive character. Opponents painted McKinney as a dangerous extremist, and money from Jewish groups poured into the Majette campaign. Though Muslim organisations supported McKinney, they were overmatched. Now, it is true that Cynthia McKinney had a lot of controversial positions. But a lot of members of Congress have a lot of controversial positions. But one thing that got her booted out of the House after ten years representing her

congressional district in Georgia was the fact that she was pro-Palestinian, anti-Israel, because that was what provoked all of that money to be poured into the race. And you notice there a very common tactic that AIPAC uses, that oftentimes the members of Congress that they're targeting are Black liberal or left liberal Democrats or Muslim Democrats as well. And the tactic they always use is to recruit another Black candidate, so that they can't claim that they're trying to put a white candidate in place of a Black Democrat. Although George Latimer is one of the exceptions – he is a white man running against Jamaal Bowman – but so often they recruit these far more mainstream, willing to play ball politicians who have demonstrated a steadfast commitment to supporting the state of Israel. And even when there's a open primary race like, Nina Turner running in Ohio, she had been critical of Israel in the past, and so they recruited another Black woman, Shontel Brown, financed her campaign overwhelmingly, and of course, Shontel Brown won, is now the incumbent representing that district in Ohio. And she is just an absolutely reliable and constant, consistent vote in favour of all things Israel. And again, this tactic is something that they have been using for a long, long time. So if you're a member of Congress, you obviously know that this is the one lobby you don't want to offend. And you'll see that AIPAC keeps saying, Oh, it's not that these people are being defeated because we pour so much money into the race, they're being defeated because they don't support Israel, and their voters agree with us that Israel should be supported. And yet, as we've shown you, the ads that they run often have nothing to do with Israel because they know that's not enough to get an incumbent removed, because actually voters don't care enough about Israel, or aren't obsessed with making sure that the United States funds it and that's why they always promote and pretend that they're concerned about other issues as well.

Now, as I said, it's not just their ability to remove members of Congress, incumbent members of Congress, or more well known candidates for open seats, it's also their ability to ensure that any pro-Israel resolution or pro-Israel bill, especially when Israel has another war and they want to make sure that Congress takes a stance in defence of Israel, not only does it get approved automatically, but it passes with near unanimity, every single time one of these AIPAC approved or AIPAC written resolutions or bills comes before Congress. Here from the Israeli newspaper Haaretz in July of 2014, which was one of the many times that Israel was also aggressively bombing Gaza. There you see the headline: *US Senate Unanimously Approves Resolution Giving Full Support of Israel on Gaza*. "The resolution had 78 bipartisan co-sponsors" – 78 out of a Senate that only has 100 members, 78 of them didn't just vote yes, they demanded to be put as sponsors of this AIPAC promoted bill – and was introduced by Senators Robert Menendez, Democrat from New Jersey, Lindsey Graham, Republican from South Carolina, Chuck Schumer, Democrat from New York, and Kelly Ayotte, a Republican from New Hampshire. The House passed a similar resolution on July 11th". Then here's the article, quote, "The US Senate unanimously approved a non-binding resolution in support of Israel's right to defend itself against rocket fire from the Gaza Strip. A similar resolution introduced by Congressman Steve Israel, the Democrat of New York, and Tom Cole, the Republican from Oklahoma, in the House that had over 140 co-sponsors, passed unanimously in the U.S. House of Representatives on July 11th".

Now all over the world, various countries were condemning that Israeli bombing campaign against Gaza, which wasn't nearly as extensive or enduring as the one that's still ongoing now, but still was extremely destructive, killed a huge number of civilians. And yet at the same time, somehow the United States not only stood on the side of Israel, but couldn't find a single member of Congress willing to vote no against that resolution. And then the Haaretz article goes on, quote, "The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, AIPAC, which backed both resolutions, praised the Senate for its passage. So AIPAC does use both the positive reinforcement and the negative reinforcement when people in Congress stand up and do what they're told and support Israel and demand that the US funds Israel and stands behind Israel. They get the head pat from AIPAC. In fact, Bernie Sanders, shortly after the October 7th attack, in November, two months later, went on Face the Nation, and when asked whether he supports a cease fire in Gaza, he said, of course I don't support a cease fire. A cease fire would help Hamas. And AIPAC then took that video, and posted it on their account and said, thank you so much, Senator Sanders, for your support of Israel and for opposing a cease fire, because you know that it will only help Hamas. So they absolutely do these headpats, they will give money to the members of Congress who stay in line. So there's all kinds of benefits from supporting Israel. But then they have the stick that they use very aggressively and very effectively, where essentially they and they alone are capable of just removing large numbers of members of Congress for failure to, always and 100% of the cases, adhere to the pro-Israel AIPAC agenda. And if you wonder why these bills passed unanimously, it's not because every member of Congress is so fanatically pro-Israel, they're fanatically pro re-election. And they know one of the ways to guarantee that, in fact, the most effective way to guarantee that, is to avoid alienating AIPAC. That really is the true power of this one lobby in Washington. Of course, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, both of them we have had on our show, several times, wrote the definitive book about this called *The Israel Lobby* back in 2006. But as Professor Mearsheimer has told us several times, if anything, the pro-Israel lobby is even more powerful in Washington now than it was back in 2006 when they wrote that book. And all of this is demonstrating that; their ability to destroy the careers of anyone who steps out of the line. And we'll see what happens if Jamaal Bowman loses the race, as is likely. But either way, it is obviously a very vivid illustration yet again, of AIPAC'S singular power in our politics.

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