

Political conservatives launch group to attack supporters of Obama's Israel policies

WASHINGTON (JTA) — Some neo-conservative Republicans and evangelical Christians have launched a group to campaign against President Obama's Middle East policy and its supporters.

The Emergency Committee for Israel's Leadership will initiate the campaign with an attack ad against Rep. Joe Sestak (D-PA), the Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate in Pennsylvania against the GOP's Pat Toomey.

The group's board includes William Kristol, who edits the neoconservative flagship, the *Weekly Standard*; conservative writer and activist Rachel Abrams, who is married to Elliott Abrams, the deputy national security adviser under President George W. Bush; and Gary Bauer, a former Republican presidential candidate who leads the group American Values.

Kristol described the group as "the

pro-Israel wing of the pro-Israel community." Sestak is favored by J Street, a pro-Israel group that advocates for an assertive American posture toward a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The ad, which will air on Fox and CNN, as well as during a Philadelphia Phillies game, opens by asking, "Does Congressman Joe Sestak understand that Israel is America's ally?" The ad claims that he appeared at a fundraiser for the Council on American Islamic Relations, a group that federal authorities have tied to Hamas.

CAIR denied the allegations and was never formally charged. The FBI at one time used CAIR for outreach to the Muslim community, but cut ties in January 2009, two years after Sestak's appearance. It is not clear whether the FBI policy of not cooperating with the group remains

in place.

The ad goes on to accuse Sestak of condemning Israel's blockade of Gaza and refusing to sign a letter drafted by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee asserting U.S. support for Israel. The letter signed by Sestak, and backed by J Street, called for an easing of the Gaza blockade that would incorporate Israel's security needs. Israel instituted such a policy in recent weeks.

A spokesman for Sestak rejected claims that he is anti-Israel.

"His record is clear on the matter and in stark contrast to his opponent, who voted against aid for Israel," campaign aide April Mellody told Politico.

A similar group, Freedom's Watch, was founded in 2007. It folded after the 2008 election, in part because it had minimal impact on the results of the election. The Emergency Committee also plans to become involved in other congressional races, according to its executive director, Noah Pollak

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B'nai Brith

Bagels and lox: B'nai B'rith of Greater Tampa Bay will hold its next bagel and lox brunch on Sunday, July 25. This annual meeting will include the election of officers, the "State of the Unit" address by unit president **Stuart Berger**, and a musical surprise. The brunch begins at 10 a.m. and will be held at the North Center of the JCC Suncoast, 2075 Sunnydale Blvd., Clearwater. Cost of the brunch is \$6. RSVP to Stuart Berger at (727) 480-5721 by Friday, July 23.

Generations After

Lunch and meeting: The Generations After group will hold a meeting and lunch on Friday, Aug. 6 at 11:45 a.m. at the Florida Holocaust Museum, third floor.

RSVP to Bonnie@AceWalker.com.

Summer barbecue: Generations After will hold its annual summer barbecue and pool party on Sunday, Aug. 29 at 4 p.m. at **Charlene Wygodski's** and **Steven Bloom's** home in St. Petersburg. All children of Holocaust survivors are welcome. For invitation and directions: [RSVP Bonnie@AceWalker.com](mailto:RSVP@Bonnie@AceWalker.com).

Brandeis National Committee

Showcase & picnic: The Tampa/St. Pete Chapter of Brandeis National Committee will hold its annual indoor picnic and showcase on Sunday, Aug. 15, from noon - 4 p.m. at the University Village Villa Clubhouse in Tampa. The study groups include book groups, lectures, foreign policy and play readings. All are welcome. Admission is \$8 plus a dish to share, but reservations are necessary. Call Sandy at (813) 963-0065 for reservations. Call Shirley at (813) 855-2660 for directions.

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