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February 18, 2015

The Honorable John A. Boehner
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Office of the Speaker
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner,

I am writing to respectfully ask you to postpone the scheduled Joint Address of Congress by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel until after the upcoming Israeli elections.

These addresses enjoy a remarkable, bipartisan tradition of great world leaders and close allies of the United States from Winston Churchill to Lech Walesa to Yitzhak Rabin to Nelson Mandela addressing Congress and the American people in solidarity.

The manner in which this invitation was extended – without advance consultation with the Obama Administration – threatens the bipartisan tradition of the Joint Address we must hold sacrosanct. While visiting in Tel Aviv yesterday, veteran Middle East envoy Dennis Ross, respected by both parties for his service to both Republican and Democratic Administrations, urged postponement of the Netanyahu address explaining, “We will all rue that day,” if Israel becomes a partisan issue in the United States.

Moreover, scheduling this address so close to Israel’s upcoming election also threatens to tarnish the tradition of the Joint Address. We cannot allow this strong, bipartisan legacy to be manipulated by placing a thumb on the scale of an ally’s democratic election. The friendship and alliance between the United States and the State of Israel transcends political parties and partisan political gamesmanship. The invitation to speak before Congress should be postponed until after the Israeli elections are completed when Prime Minister Netanyahu – or his successor – will be welcome to address Congress as Israeli leaders have been welcome and will always be welcome in the future.

Sincerely,

Joe Courtney
MEMBER OF CONGRESS