AJC Survey Shows Jewish Disapproval of President Obama Rising

October 12, 2010 – New York – Growing Jewish concerns over President Obama's handling of U.S.-Israel relations and the Iran nuclear threat are apparent in a just-completed American Jewish Committee (AJC) survey, the second national survey of American Jewish opinion conducted this year by the global advocacy organization.

Forty-nine percent of U.S. Jews approve, while 45 percent disapprove, of the Obama Administration's handling of U.S.-Israel relations, according to the new survey. AJC's earlier survey, conducted in March, found that 55 percent approved and 37 percent disapproved. In AJC's 2009 survey, 54 percent approved, and 32 percent disapproved.

In contrast, the view of how Prime Minister Netanyahu is handling of U.S.-Israel relations has improved. The new survey shows that 62 percent approve, and 27 percent disapprove. In March, 57 percent approved and 30 percent disapproved.

American Jews are somewhat less positive today than seven months ago in characterizing U.S.-Israel relations. While 7 percent answered "very positive" and 61 percent "somewhat positive," in March 10 percent were "very positive" and 63 percent "somewhat positive." And, in 2009, 11 percent were "very positive" and 70 percent said "somewhat positive."

Conducted annually since 1990, AJC's surveys often are cited as the most authoritative barometer of American Jewish opinion on a range of issues. This was the first time two surveys were commissioned in the same calendar year.

"Most disturbing in our survey's findings is the nervousness of American Jews about two of our nation's top foreign policy issues and how our leadership is responding," said AJC Executive Director David Harris. "Our surveys are an important means for Jews to channel their most pressing concerns to elected officials and the American public."

On Iran, American Jewish confidence in the president's approach continues to dip. Only 43 percent approve of the Obama administration's handling of the Iran nuclear issue, while 46 percent disapprove. In March, 47 percent approved and 42 percent disapproved. In 2009, 49 percent approved and 35 percent disapproved.

Uneasiness over Iran's quest for nuclear weapons capacity is reflected in the growing numbers who doubt the current strategy of sanctions and diplomacy will stop Iran.

Among U.S. Jews, 72 percent believe there is "little" or "no" chance that a combination of diplomacy and sanctions can stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons, while 23 percent believe these approaches do have a chance. In March, 68 percent said there was "little" or "no" chance, and 32 percent said there is a chance they will succeed.

Support for the military option, if the sanctions and diplomacy strategy fails, continues to rise, with 59 percent supporting, and 35 percent opposing, U.S. military action to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. In March, 53 percent supported, and 42 percent opposed, possible American military action.

Those who would support Israeli military action increased to 70 percent, while 26 percent oppose. In March, 62 percent supported, 33 percent opposed.

Regarding neighboring conflicts, 64 percent say the U.S. is losing the war in Afghanistan, while 25 percent disagree, and 47 percent say it is losing the war in Irag, while 41 percent disagree.

Overall approval of Obama's performance as president has dropped to 51 percent, from 57 percent in March. Obama captured 78 percent of the Jewish vote in the presidential elections two years ago.

The president received 45 percent approval on his handling of the economy, a drop from 55 percent in March. On health care, 51 percent approved, similar to the 50 percent who responded favorably in March. And, on homeland security, there was no change between March and October, with 62 percent approving.

Looking ahead to the midterm elections, 92 percent of American Jews surveyed say they plan to vote on November 2. Asked whether the country would be better off with a Congress controlled by the Republicans or Democrats, 57 percent favor a Democratic-controlled legislature, and 33 percent favor the Republicans. Survey respondents identified themselves as Democrat (48 percent), Republican (17 percent), and Independent (34 percent).

A series of questions regarding the Arab-Israeli peace process yielded results similar to previous surveys, showing continuity in American Jewish views of a Palestinian state, the status of Jerusalem, and West Banksettlements.

Like the March results, the new survey found that 48 percent favor, and 45 percent oppose, establishment of a Palestinian state.

Regarding the future of West Bank settlements, 6 percent say "all", 56 percent say "some", and 37 percent say "none" should be dismantled as part of a permanent agreement with the Palestinians.

A majority of American Jews, 60 percent, continue to support a united Jerusalem, Israel's capital, while 35 percent say Israel should compromise on the city's status in the framework of a permanent peace with the Palestinians.

American Jews remain nearly unanimous – 95 percent – in supporting the proposal requiring the Palestinians to recognize Israel as a Jewish state in a final peace agreement. In March and in 2009, the figure was 94 percent.

Regarding the wider Middle East region, 50 percent of American Jews say the Turkish government today is not a friend of the United States, and 35 percent think it is, while 71 percent say it is not a friend of Israel, and 16 percent say it is.

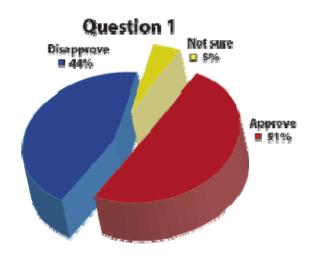
On domestic U.S. policy issues, the survey posed one immigration question, regarding a much-publicizedArizona law giving police the power to ask individuals they have stopped about their residency status. The survey revealed that 52 percent support, and 46 percent, opposed the measure.

The AJC survey was conducted by Synovate, a leading research organization. The 800 respondents were interviewed by telephone between August 31 and October 5, 2010.

The Fall 2010 Survey was conducted by telephone for the American Jewish Committee by Synovate, a leading survey-research organization. Interviewing began on August 31, 2010, and continued until October 5, 2010; no interviewing took place on the Sabbath or the Jewish holidays. The 800 respondents were selected from members of Synovate's Consumer Opinion Panel that have identified themselves as being Jewish and supplemented from a list of American Jews. Synovate's Consumer Opinion Panel consists of households who have been recruited and agreed to participate in surveys for Synovate. The interviewing took place to insure a demographic cross-section of the United States adult Jewish population.

A. Obama Administration

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama has handled his job as President?



2. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Barack Obama has handled each of the following?

	Approve	Disapprove	Not sure
A. The economy	45	51	4
B. Health care	51	46	3
C. Homeland security	62	33	5
D. Gulf oil spill	53	42	4

3. A new law in Arizona gives police the power to ask people they've stopped to verify their residency status.

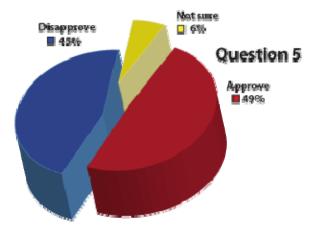
Supporters say this will help crack down on illegal immigration. Opponents say it could violate civil rights and lead to racial profiling. On balance, do you support or oppose this law?

Support	52
Oppose	46
Not Sure	2

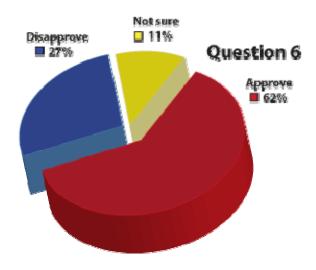
4. How would you characterize relations between Israel and the United States today? Are they very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, or very negative?

Very positive	7
Somewhat positive	61
Somewhat negative	26
Very negative	5
Not Sure	1

5. Do you approve or disapprove of the Obama Administration's handling of U.S. -Israel relations?



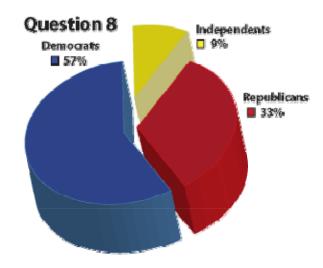
6. Do you approve or disapprove of the Netanyahu government's handling of Israel-U.S. relations?



7. Are you planning to vote in the 2010 Congressional elections?

Yes	92
No	6
Not Sure	2

8. Do you think the country would be better off if the Republicans controlled Congress, or if the Democrats controlled Congress?



9. Thinking ahead to the November 2010 congressional elections, how important will each of the following issues be to your vote?

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Not Sure
The economy	87	12	1	1
The Gulf Coast oil spill	26	49	24	1
The wars in Iraq/Afghanistan	66	30	4	1
Health care	80	18	17	0
Israel	61	34	5	1
Unemployment	81	17	2	0
Energy policy	50	44	6	3
Immigration	43	47	10	1
Foreign policy	61	36	4	1
Financial reform	62	31	6	3

B. Arab-Israel Conflict

10. As compared with one year ago, are you more or less optimistic about the chance for a lasting peace between Israel and the Arabs, or do you think the chance for a lasting peace is about the same as it was one year ago?

More optimistic	8
Less optimistic	18
Same as one year ago	75
Not sure	1

11. In the current situation, do you favor or oppose the establishment of a Palestinian state?

Favor	48
Oppose	45
Not sure	6

12. In the framework of a permanent peace with the Palestinians, should Israel be willing to compromise on the status of Jerusalem as a united city under Israeli jurisdiction?

Yes	35
No	60
Not sure	5

13. As part of a permanent settlement with the Palestinians, should Israel be willing to dismantle all,

some, or none of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank?

All	6
Some	56
None	37
Not sure	2

14. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "The goal of the Arabs is not the return of occupied territories but rather the destruction of Israel."

Agree	76
Disagree	20
Not sure	4

15. Do you think that Israel can or cannot achieve peace with a Hamas-led Palestinian government?

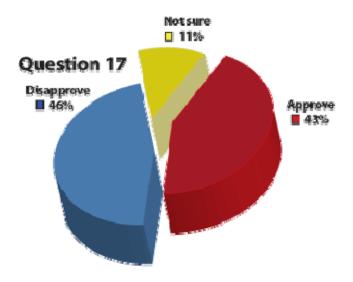
Can	14
Cannot	82
Not sure	4

16. Should the Palestinians be required or not be required to recognize Israel as a Jewish state in a final peace agreement?

Required	95
Not required	3
Not sure	2

C. International Issues

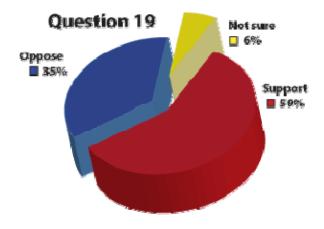
17. Do you approve or disapprove of the Obama Administration's handling of the Iran nuclear issue?



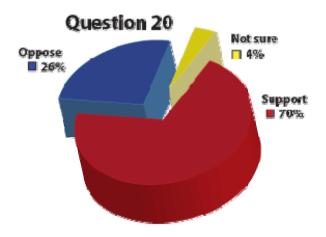
18. How much of a chance do you think there is that a combination of diplomacy and sanctions can stop Iran from developing nuclear weapons? Is there a good chance, some chance, little chance, or no chance?

Good chance	4
Some chance	23
Little chance	44
No chance	28
Not sure	1

19. If diplomacy and sanctions fail, would you support or oppose the United States taking military action against Iran to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons?



20. If diplomacy and sanctions fail, would you support or oppose Israel taking military action against Iran to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons?



21. Do you think the United States is winning or losing the war in Iraq?

Winning	41
Losing	47
Not sure	12

22. Do you think the United States is winning or losing the war in Afghanistan?

Winning	25
Losing	64
Not sure	11

23. Do you think the Turkish government today is or is not a friend of the United States?

Is a friend	35
Is not a friend	50
Not sure	15

24. Do you think the Turkish government today is or is not a friend of Israel?

Is a friend	16
Is not a friend	71
Not sure	13

D. Background Factors

25. In politics as of today, do you consider yourself a Republican, a Democrat, or an Independent?

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Democrat	48
Independent	34
Not sure	1
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26. I am going to read you a list of political views that people might hold. They range from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

Extremely liberal	6
Liberal	22
Slightly liberal	14
Moderate, middle of the road	28
Slightly conservative	12
Conservative	13
Extremely conservative	3
Not sure	2

27. Do you think of yourself as...

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Orthodox	9
Conservative	22
Reform	28
Reconstructionist	2
Just Jewish	38
Not sure	1

28. How important would you say being Jewish is in your own life?

Very important	51
Fairly important	33
Not very important	16
Not sure	1

29. How close do you feel to Israel?

Very close	29
Fairfly close	40
Fairly distant	23
Very distant	7
Not sure	1