

Towards An Even-handed Foreign Policy in the US Congress?

Rep. Dennis Kucinich leads a new trend

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According to astute observers — there is a new trend in Congress in favor of a more even-handed approach to foreign policy. The bipartisan group, Council for the National Interest hails Congressman Dennis Kucinich as the leader of the new trend.

The Council for the National Interest (CNI) was founded by former Congressman Paul Findley. CNI is a bipartisan group that supports a more balanced and even-handed US foreign policy in the Middle East.

For a host of reasons from the environment to foreign policy to healthcare to banking and economic reform, Dennis Kucinich is rightfully regarded as the leader of the progressive caucus in the US House of Representatives. In recent weeks, Kucinich led the opposition to the resolution backing Israel's war against Gaza – H. Res. 34.

In a formal statement citing Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention that prohibits attacks on civilian populations, Kucinich called on Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon to launch an independent United Nations enquiry into the recent Gaza War.

In an eloquent and perceptive letter addressed to President Barack Obama, Kucinich called for a decisive shift in US foreign policy from the Bush Era to what he described as a “rational foreign policy.” In his letter to Obama, Kucinich proposed:

US aid for the reconstruction of Gaza Immediate humanitarian aid to Gaza Immediate end to the siege-blockade of Gaza that is preventing the delivery of food, water and medical supplies

Immediate ceasefire A diverse group of advisors for Special Envoy George Mitchell.

In the last election cycle, the Israel Lobby targeted Dennis Kucinich by funding two opponents (one Democrat and one Republican) for his seat in Congress. But even against heavily funded opposition in his primary and the general election — Kucinich won with over 57% of the vote.

In his opposition to US support for the Gaza War, Dennis Kucinich was joined by more than two dozen members of Congress who opposed the Gaza War resolution by voting, “Nay,” “Present,” and abstaining from the vote. This growing support for an even-handed approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict is important, because it proves that there is a viable trend to reform US foreign policy vis a vis the Middle East. When 44 members of Congress

representing one tenth of the membership of the House of Representatives oppose the Party Whip, there is a definite trend.

This emergent foreign policy faction is clearly bipartisan. Republican Ron Paul and his colleague from Texas, Paul Ronald, voted against the Gaza resolution, and seven more Republicans abstained from voting for the resolution that enjoyed the backing of the Bush White House in the former president's last formal gesture as a defiant neoconservative to closing out his deeply unpopular presidency.

The growth of this important progressive foreign policy faction can largely be attributed to Kucinich's courageous leadership and his political perseverance against the odds.

Planetary has taken note that many members of Congress who support progressive ideals in domestic policy voted in favor of the Gaza War resolution. In the future, these errant progressives will join the progressive foreign policy faction as President Obama unfolds historic changes in US policy such as those he announced last week at the State Department.

By appointing George Mitchell as Special Envoy to Israel-Palestine; supporting the cessation of the siege of Gaza and promising to be "aggressive" in his drive for a peace agreement between the Arabs and Israelis, President Obama has already taken steps proposed and supported by Kucinich to formalize a more even-handed approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the broader Middle East.

In his remarks at the State Department, President Obama said, "It will be the policy of my administration to actively and aggressively seek a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as between Israel and its Arab neighbors."

Considering President Obama's new direction in foreign policy, it now seems seriously unlikely that next month's elections in Israel will have any impact on US policy. President Obama has calibrated a new diplomatic trajectory that removes, rejects and repudiates the failed neoconservative policies of George Bush who never took an even-handed approach to the Middle East for even one day of his disastrous presidency.

It is equally clear that Dennis Kucinich and Ron Paul will continue to lead the Congressional opposition to neoconservative foreign policy in the House of Representatives as they have for the past eight years during the rogue presidency of the partisan neocon, George W. Bush.

Voting - "Nay" - 6 / 4 Democrats and 2 Republicans

Dennis Kucinich (D, OH) Maxine Waters (D, CA) Paul Ronald (R, TX) Nick Rahall (D, WV) Ron Paul (R, TX) Gwen Moore (D, WI)

Voting - "Present" - 22 Democrats

Raul Grijalva (D, AZ) Lynn Woolsey (D, CA) George Miller (D, CA) Barbara Lee (D, CA) Fortney Stark (D, CA) Sam Farr, (D, CA) Diane Watson (D, CA) Loretta Sanchez (D, CA) Henry Johnson (D, CA) Neil Abercrombi (D, HI) Donna Edwards (D, MD) John Oliver (D, MA) Carolyn Kilpatrick (D, MI) John Dingell (D, MI) Betty McCollum (D, MN) Keith Ellison (D, MN) Donald Payne (D, NJ) Maurice Hinchey (D, NY) Earl Blumenauer (D, OR) Peter Defazio (D, OR)

James Moran (D, VI) James McDermott (D, WA)

Not Voting-Abstention - 16 / 9 Democrats and 7 Republicans

John Shadegg (R, AZ) Robert Berry (D, AZ) Victor Snyder (D, AZ) Elton Gallegly (D, CA) Hilda Solis (D, CA) Todd Tiahrt (R, KS) William Delahunt (D, MA) Samuel Graves (R, MO) Walter Jones (R, NC) Henry Brown (R, SC) Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (D, SD) Jeb Hensarling (R, TX) Kay Granger (R, TX) Frederick Boucher (D, VI) Brian Baird (D, WA) Steve Kagan (D, WI)

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