

—Slug:.....COMM-0865.opin.letter.000_friends_of_israe
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—For section.....Voices/Letters from readers
—Format.....LETTERS - Opinions - Letters to the Editor
—Dateline.....Athens
—Article Number:.....43583



Notes from editor (not for publication):

Hi, Mark — Corrected the name of the House Ethics Panel. Thanks, as always. —Jeff



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Ethics Panel made the right call on state reps.' trip to
2 Israel

####END HED####

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4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 Vermont Friends of Israel supports the House Ethics
6 Panel's decision to dismiss the complaints against Reps. Sarah
7 Austin, Matt Birong, Gina Galfetti, Will Greer, and James
8 Gregoire arising from their trip to Israel last summer.
9 The committee was right to do so, and public officials
10 should be allowed to participate in legitimate educational travel
11 without being cast as scandalous.

12 Lawmakers were dragged through the mud for choosing
13 to see Israel firsthand rather than through the distorted lens of an
14 antizionist mob. The resulting ethics review process wasted
15 legislators' time and taxpayer dollars, only to conclude there
16 were "no reasonable grounds to believe an ethical violation
17 occurred."

18 The entire episode exposed how consumed by hate local
19 extremists have become, and how their protests against the
20 Jewish state fuel antisemitism in Vermont.

21 Fact-finding trips are a way to better understand a
22 complicated region, its security concerns, and the foreign policy
23 realities that affect both the United States and her allies. Critics
24 treat any engagement with Israel as inherently corrupt or
25 immoral. That is not a serious standard. Lawmakers routinely
26 meet with governments, advocacy groups, and institutions whose
27 policies are debated or controversial.

28 The relevant question is whether any rules were violated.
29 The committee found there were not.

30 Reasonable people can disagree on policy, war powers,
31 or the conduct of foreign governments. But disagreement is not
32 an ethics violation, and political anger is not proof of corruption.

33 The Vermont House Ethics Committee made the correct
34 call.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

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VIDEO:

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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