

USIEA Hosts 2019 Congressional Tour to Israel

USIEA hosted our 2019 Congressional Tour (CT 2019) to Israel, August 16-25, 2019. Participating in the tour were Representatives Cathy McMorris Rodgers (Washington), Bradley Byrne (Alabama), Anne Wagner (Missouri) and Phillip Roe (Tennessee). CT 2019, led by USIEA Executive Director Heather Johnston maintained the tradition of excellence set in USIEA's previous Congressional Tours. The Representatives gained a perspective that gave them greater understanding of convoluted issues and they left Israel energized to act on what they learned.

Defying Convention

USIEA has always defied convention by bringing the Members of Congress into Judea and Samaria, the cradle of the Judeo-Christian faith. The tour visited Ariel, the largest city in Samaria, with over 20,000 residents. We toured a factory in which Israelis and Palestinians work side by side. We spoke with Palestinians making four times the income they would make working at a Palestinian factory. We witnessed two populations celebrating shared interests, mutual productivity, and prosperity. We witnessed the seeds of peace. We met with the Judea and Samaria Chamber of Commerce and Industry



Members were guests in the home of Sheikh Ashraf al Jabari in Hebron.

who is leading the development of integrated business for the entire region. At the University of Ariel, Israel's fastest-growing university, we heard from professors about their difficulties in securing funding for joint research with American universities only because of the university's "problematic" geographic location.

In Hebron, we toured the Tomb of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We were also guests in the home of Sheikh Ashraf al Jabari, who participated in the recent U.S. "Peace to Prosperity" workshop in Bahrain. There Israeli and Palestinian

business leaders shared their experience and plans to integrate the Palestinian and Israeli economies in Judea and Samaria.

Key Political Figures

USIEA Congressional Tours always endeavor to introduce the Members to key political figures. The Members enjoyed lunch with David Friedman, the U.S. Ambassador to Israel. Ambassador Friedman has

developed a deep and meaningful relationship with USIEA and spent more than ninety minutes with the group. Ambassador Friedman was candid and spoke freely. He discussed the new opportunities for peace in the region, and policy changes introduced by the Trump Administration over the past two and a half years. The Members asked the Ambassador pointed questions and received comprehensive answers.

As fitting for a high-ranking delegation of Members of Congress, the group had a closed-door meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Mr. Netanyahu spent an hour fielding questions from



A Closed Door Meeting with the Prime Minister

Civilian and Defense Sectors of Science and Technology

CT19 shone a spotlight on the civilian and defense sectors of science and technology. The Tour visited the STI company, where the Members got hands-on experience using a system that can detect bombs and drugs being smuggled across the border at legal ports of entry. They saw the future of autonomous cars at Mobileye, a company purchased by Intel for 18 billion dollars. And they visited an airbase to see a newly operational Arrow-3 anti-missile battery. USEIA was



Meeting U.S. Ambassador to Israel, David Friedman

the Members. They discussed their concern about Israel's burgeoning economic relations with China in the face of a potential trade war, and the great potential for a Palestinian-Israeli

Regional Development Financial Initiative in Judea and Samaria, as well as ensuring U.S.-Israel defense cooperation and coordination in the face of the clear and present danger of Iranian expansionism.



Viewing the Arrow 3 Missile Defence System

instrumental in securing funding for a recent system test in Alaska that was vital in proving the system's performance. It was during CT17 that Congressman Mac Thornberry, then Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, visited an Arrow battery where he gained an understanding of the significance of Arrow-3 and became its greatest supporter.



Opportunity for Renewal

The tour visited an array of places with deep religious significance that provided an opportunity for personal renewal. They included the City of David, Garden Tomb, Garden of Gethsemane, Tabernacle at Shiloh, Morning Mass at Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Mount of Beatitudes, and, the site of the miracle of the loaves and fishes. In each place, Heather Johnston provided the Biblical context and background that have shaped Israel's heritage and are foundational to both Judaism and Christianity.

Implementing an Action Plan

Most importantly, CT2019 will continue a strong history of action arising from the tour. Members are involved in implementing an action plan for support of the Judea Samaria Chamber, increased U.S.-Israel cooperation in defense and technology, funding for academic research in Judea Samaria, and increased awareness of Iranian expansion in the Gulf Region.