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Subject: Pro-Israel effort to combat BDS on U.S. state level gains steam

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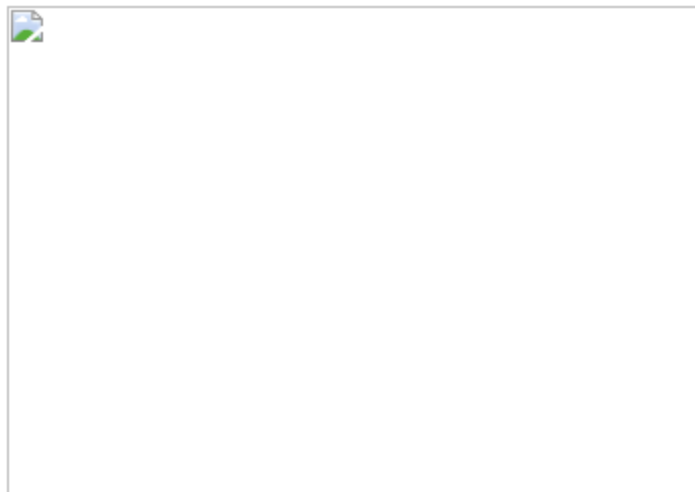
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Pro-Israel effort to combat BDS on
U.S. state level gains steam



A BDS protest against Israel

Pro-Israel effort to combat BDS on U.S. state level gains steam

By Sean Savage/JNS.org

Resolutions that formally condemn the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel in the Tennessee and Indiana state legislatures mark what a group of pro-Israel organizations and grassroots activists hope is just the start of a new trend in fighting BDS on American soil.

The Tennessee General Assembly on April 21 became the first state legislature in the U.S. to formally condemn the BDS movement through the passage of Senate Joint Resolution 170. The resolution was initiated by Laurie Cardoza-Moore, founder of the Christian Zionist group Proclaiming Justice to the Nations (PJTN). Cardoza-Moore worked with local Jewish and Christian organizations to bring the resolution to the state legislature.

"With the current climate of increasing anti-Semitism, anti-Israel, and anti-Zionist campaigns, Tennesseans and all people of conscience should endorse public statements of support for our Jewish brethren living in Tennessee and pro-Israel students attending colleges and universities in our state," Cardoza-Moore said.

The resolution, initially passed April 9 by the Tennessee Senate in a 30-0 vote, was approved by the Tennessee House of Representatives in an overwhelming 93-1 vote 12 days later, with Democratic State Representative G.A. Hardaway the lone dissenter. The measure, which is expected to be signed next week by Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam, declares that the BDS movement is "one of the main vehicles for spreading anti-Semitism and advocating the elimination of the Jewish state," adding that BDS activities in Tennessee "undermine the Jewish people's right to self-determination, which they are fulfilling in the State of Israel."

Furthermore, the resolution states that the BDS movement and its agenda are "inherently antithetical and deeply damaging to the causes of peace, justice, equality, democracy, and human rights for all the peoples in the Middle East."

According to a PJTN press release, "BDS has an active presence in Tennessee, particularly through The U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, a group that is a leader of BDS. UT (University of Tennessee) Knoxville alumnus Rev. Osagyefo Uhuru Sekou, a leader in the U.S. Campaign, was this year's keynote speaker at the national meeting of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), a college campus group that has spearheaded anti-Israel demonstrations."

Christians United for Israel (CUFI), whose 2 million-plus members make it America's largest pro-Israel organization, strongly supported the anti-BDS resolution in Tennessee. CUFI's coordinator in the region, Pastor Lyndon Allen, testified in support of the measure.

"CUFI recognized the importance of this legislation and fought for it since day one. With more than 200,000 members, Tennessee is one of CUFI's strongest states and we are very proud of our local membership and our regional coordinator, Pastor Lyndon Allen, for their advocacy," CUFI Communications Director Ari Morgenstern told JNS.org.

"Allen's testimony before the [Tennessee] Senate's Finance, Ways and Means Committee, coupled with our local membership standing firmly behind the resolution and

alongside members of the local Jewish community, played a pivotal role in seeing this legislation pass," added Morgenstern.

Tennessee State Senator Dolores Gresham, who co-sponsored the resolution along with State Representative Sheila Butt, said the state's legislature "chooses to preserve its values by publicly condemning this blatantly anti-Semitic, anti-Israel bigotry, and send a clear message that Tennessee condemns such views."

Joanne Bregman, a local Jewish activist and attorney who advocated for the resolution's passage, told JNS.org that the Tennessee General Assembly's action could serve as a template for other U.S. states to recognize the growing threats of the BDS movement and anti-Semitism. She added that the Christian-initiated bill should be a "wake-up call" for the Jewish community to be the ones "who need to fill the public information void" on BDS and anti-Semitism.

That effort is already underway, with the Indiana House of Representatives unanimously (93-0) passing House Resolution 59 on April 22. Then resolution now moves to the Indiana Senate, after which point it is expected to be signed by Governor Mike Pence.

Similar to the Tennessee resolution, the Indiana measure "expresses opposition to the anti-Jewish and anti-Israel" BDS movement, adding that the global spread of anti-Jewish speech and violence "represents an attack, not only on Jews, but on the fundamental principles of the United States." The resolution goes on to thank the presidents of Indiana University and Purdue University for "strongly" condemning the boycott of Israeli academic institutions after some faculty members and other staffers at those schools voiced support for the BDS movement.

The Indiana resolution was initiated by the Jewish American Affairs Committee of Indiana (JAACI), who presented it to the Indiana General Assembly.

"Indiana's resolution benefited from the Tennessee model anti-BDS resolution and is now the second state in a growing national movement to defend Israel against BDS," Elliot Bartky—the president of JAACI, who testified in support of the resolution before the Indiana legislature—told JNS.org.

"[The resolution] is an important step in the fight against one of the most virulent forms of anti-Jewish movements in recent years," Bartky added. "Ideas and speech have consequences,

and the growth of BDS on university campuses and in the public arena must be fought now to prevent this vicious attempt to delegitimize and destroy Israel from spreading.”

PJTN's Cardoza-Moore said her group plans to launch a more intensive nationwide campaign to get more state legislatures to affirm their opposition to the BDS movement.

“[The BDS] movement poses a huge threat to our students—not even [only] to Jewish students, but to any pro-Israel students on campus. That way to defeat this is to educate people by giving them the tools and mechanisms to confront BDS,” she said.

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