

# Jewish Group Joins in Protest of Hagel Nomination

Immediately prior to President Obama's nomination of Senator Chuck Hagel to the position of Secretary of Defense, American-Jewish group Jewish Voice for Peace announced that supporters sent over 10,000 emails to President Obama since late last week, asserting that the nomination of a U.S. Secretary of Defense be based on qualification for the job, not a neocon litmus test of unconditional support for Israel's rightwing government.

In their emails to President Obama, JVP supporters point out that "what is important regarding Senator Hagel's potential appointment is that the decision be made based on his abilities, qualifications and suitability for the job. ... But too often in Washington when it comes to issues of concern to Israel, that is not the case."

"The American Jewish community is split on Chuck Hagel's nomination," said Rebecca Vilkomerson, Executive Director of Jewish Voice for Peace. "While large Jewish institutions are imposing a litmus test on the nomination which requires unquestioning alignment with Israel's right-wing government, JVP's members have shown that a substantial portion of the Jewish community welcome daylight between U.S. and Israeli policies."

Sydney Levy, Director of Advocacy at Jewish Voice for Peace and a former staffer for the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission noted, "It is interesting to see how the issue of Chuck Hagel's position on gay rights is being used as a red herring in this discussion. Chuck Hagel has apologized for his positions from 15 years ago, which in any case were not substantively different on LGBT issues than most

other politicians—including most Democrats—at that time.”

Jewish Voice for Peace is a national grassroots peace organization dedicated to promoting a U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East based on equality, democracy, human rights and respect for international law.

JVP has over 140,000 supporters; over 35 local chapters; offices in New York, Oakland, and Seattle; and a Rabbinical Council with dozens of members. The board of advisors includes Tony Kushner, Ed Asner, Naomi Klein, Noam Chomsky, Eve Ensler and many others.