

Texas Gov. Rick Perry Works to Strengthen Economic Development Ties With Israel

While media reports place Texas Governor **Rick Perry**'s visit to **Israel** this week within the context of his presumed bid for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination, the trip itself focused on economic development and **Israel**-Texas ties.

During Perry's meetings with Israeli leaders, including **Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** and **President Shimon Peres**, "never once did anyone ask him what his plans were for 2016, nor did he bring it up," said Fred Zeidman, a Houston businessman and Republican activist who accompanied Perry on his trip.

"I will tell you, through every meeting we sat through, it was 100 percent about promoting business for the state of Texas and the state of Israel," Zeidman told .

"A lot of this trip was geared for Rick to explore ways in which Texas could be helpful to developing the energy industry in **Israel**," he said.

Perry attended a water technology conference and spoke about the mutual challenges Texas and Israel face in water management. He was also in Israel to announce the planned opening of Texas A&M University's "Peace Campus" campus in Nazareth, which will serve the Israeli city's Muslim, Christian, and Jewish populations.

Zeidman said Perry's love for **Israel** is illustrated by the fact that in the 1990s, when he was the agriculture commissioner of Texas, he took money out of his own budget to ensure the survival of the Texas-Israel Exchange Program—which supports technology to be used in agriculture—when funding from the state was phased out.

Texas A&M, meanwhile, will be the first American university with a campus branch in **Israel**, an ideal situation for the **Jewish** state given the school's excellence in the fields of engineering and computer science, Zeidman said.

"To have that campus in **Israel**, I think it's going to be an incredible success, and I couldn't be prouder of A&M for doing it, and I couldn't be prouder of the governor for having supported it," he said.