

**JEWISH COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS**  
**DRAFT RESOLUTION ON PLACING COUNTRY OVER PARTY**

Sponsored by Rabbinical Assembly, Union for Reform Judaism, and Jewish  
Community Relations Council of Atlanta

**Summary:** This resolution encourages government officials to fulfill their constitutional duty to the country ahead of partisan politics, to reject obstructionism, and to focus on working together for the safety and welfare of the American people.

1 Since its founding JCPA has been dedicated to bringing the voice of the Jewish  
2 community to bear on the most challenging issues of the day. As a community,  
3 we must continue to engage with one another rooted in principles of respectful  
4 dialogue, even when we disagree vehemently. The same principles must apply to  
5 elected officials at all levels, entrusted by voters to steer the nation through the  
6 best and worst of times.

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8 According to Jewish tradition, we are meant to be in extended conversation with  
9 those who disagree with us. In [Bava Metzia 84a](#), the Talmud tells the story of  
10 Rabbi Yohanan after his hevruta Reish Lakish dies. Though Rabbi Yohanan's  
11 subsequent conversation partners initially affirmed his views, he found the lack of  
12 constructive disagreement so demoralizing that he ultimately died. Discourse  
13 itself is life sustaining.

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15 In recent years, our political process has become, too often, as divisive as it is life  
16 sustaining. We strive to embody the aspirations expressed by Founding Framers  
17 James Madison who wrote, "Government is instituted and ought to be exercised  
18 for the benefit of the people; which consists in the enjoyment of life and liberty,  
19 with the right of acquiring and using property, and generally of pursuing and  
20 obtaining happiness and safety." In modern times, former Rep. Barney Frank  
21 offered a similar sentiment, noting that "Government is simply the name we give  
22 to the things we choose to do together."

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24 **The Jewish Council for Public Affairs believes:**

- 25       • Government officials should fulfill their constitutional duty to the country  
26       ahead of partisan politics, reject obstructionism, and prioritize working  
27       together for the safety and welfare of the American people.  
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- 29       • Government officials have a responsibility to fulfill the trust placed in  
30       them by constituents by doing their utmost to carry out the responsibilities  
31       of their office without regard to party.  
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- 33       • Political disagreement is an inevitable and healthy part of human society.  
34       According to Jewish tradition, argument can be holy but not when it  
35       diminishes the holiness of humanity. Political leaders should respect the  
36       Divine spark within others and seek all opportunities to work together on  
37       behalf of the American people.  
38
- 39       • Disagreement over issues should never devolve into denigration of  
40       character. We can be in disagreement and still be in relationship and  
41       community. Being in relationship with one another can be an antidote to  
42       hate and intolerance and can help us work together to achieve common  
43       goals.  
44
- 45       • We have a responsibility to positively shape public discourse by modeling  
46       constructive engagement on political issues. We must strive to overcome  
47       our instinctive defensiveness, argumentativeness, and fear, and instead  
48       look for ways to listen and converse respectfully. In doing so, we can  
49       diminish political gridlock and encourage effective governance.  
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- 51       • Government is a reflection of the community itself. The way we function  
52       in our diverse communities, despite our differences, should be reflected in  
53       our government.  
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55     **The Jewish community relations field should:**

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57             •   Hold political officials accountable to fulfilling the trust placed in them to  
58                 put our country's interests over their partisan or personal interests.

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60             •   Advocate for policies and practices that promote good governance and  
61                 reduce partisan obstructionism.

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63             •   Model and encourage the principles of constructive engagement and  
64                 leadership in relationships with political officials.