

Jewish Voice for Peace Vermont-New Hampshire Files Ethics Complaint Against Five Vermont Legislators

By: Jewish Voice for Peace Vermont-New Hampshire Legislative Work Group

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The Vermont-New Hampshire chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace filed ethics complaints against five Vermont legislators on December 30 and December 31 with the Vermont Ethics Commission. Respectfully, we call on the Commission to recommend to the House Ethics Panel of the Vermont House of Representatives that it conduct a thorough investigation of the complaints and take appropriate disciplinary actions should it find the legislators violated the state's Code of Ethics.

The complaints allege that Rep. Sarah Austin (Chittenden-19), Rep. James Gregoire (Franklin-6), Rep. Matt Birong (Addison-3), Rep. Will Greer (Bennington-2) and Rep. Gina Galfetti (Washington-Orange) violated Vermont's Governmental Code of Ethics when, as members of the House of Representatives, they accepted prohibited gifts from the State of Israel to attend "50 States, One Israel," an event held from September 15 through 18, 2025.

The complaints, as filed with the ethics commission, are at tinyurl.com/JVP-complaints.

According to Fran Miller, a spokesperson for Jewish Voice for Peace Vermont-New Hampshire, "The representatives accepted gifts of travel to, from, and within Israel, including chartered flights, accommodations in luxury, five-star hotels, meals, and guided tours in Jerusalem, all paid for by the Israeli government."

The gifts were valued by the Israeli foreign ministry at **\$6,500**. The ethics code defines a "gift" as "*anything of value, tangible or intangible, that is given for less than adequate consideration.*"

JVP VT-NH contends the gifts are not permissible for a public servant as specified in 3 V.S.A. § 1203g.

Moreover, we allege acceptance of these gifts violated 3 V.S.A. § 1203b: "*A public servant shall avoid any actions creating the appearance that the public servant is violating the Code of Ethics. Whether particular circumstances create an appearance that the Code of Ethics have been violated shall be determined from the perspective of a reasonable individual with knowledge of the relevant facts.*"

The public record shows the legislators were invited primarily to be lobbied by high government officials, including the prime minister and foreign minister, with the expectation they would support legislation in their home states favorable to Israel's geopolitical and economic interests.

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's Prime Minister, characterized the event as an initiative to rally support for his country. He said to the legislators: "*I thank you for coming here to stand with Israel. ... We value and cherish your support. This is an active effort to counter attempts to besiege Israel – not isolated, not symbolic, but a real effort to push back.*"

Gideon Sa'ar, Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs, urged legislators to adopt laws to stop [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions](#) (BDS) initiatives and to ban speech that he claims "delegitimizes" Israel. He inaccurately urged legislators to conflate BDS and "delegitimization" with anti-Semitism.

"That Vermont legislators would accept \$6,500 in gifts to be lobbied by a foreign government is disturbing in its own right," said Liz Blum, also with Jewish Voice for Peace Vermont-New Hampshire. "But it is indefensible that the five in question allowed themselves to be lobbied by a government that stands credibly accused by multiple organizations of war crimes and genocide in Gaza."¹

Israel's genocidal war in Gaza was raging while Vermont's legislators were being feted and lobbied.

On Tuesday, September 16, the second full day the legislators were in Israel, the country's defense minister openly boasted that "[Gaza is burning.](#)" That same day, the U.N.'s Independent International Commission of Inquiry released a [72-page report](#), which concluded that "*Israel is responsible for the commission of genocide in Gaza. ...The responsibility for these atrocity crimes lies with Israeli authorities at the highest echelons who have orchestrated a genocidal campaign for almost two years now with the specific intent to destroy the Palestinian group in Gaza.*"

These are the same authorities "at the highest echelons" who lobbied the Vermont legislators.

Fran Miller said, "The House Ethics Panel must conduct a thorough investigation to determine if Vermont's Governmental Code of Ethics has been violated and take appropriate measures if it finds reasonable grounds that the legislators committed a violation." She added, "State legislators and other public servants owe their loyalty to the people of the Green Mountain State and to its constitution, not to a foreign government committing genocide."

Jewish Voice for Peace Vermont-New Hampshire is a regional affiliate of Jewish Voice for Peace, the largest, progressive, Jewish anti-Zionist organization in the world. We are a grassroots, multiracial, cross-class, intergenerational movement of U.S. Jews in solidarity with the Palestinian freedom struggle.

¹ Some of the most prominent of these organizations include [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Genocide Watch](#), [B'Tselem](#), [Oxfam](#), the [International Association of Genocide Scholars \(IAGS\)](#), [Physicians for Human Rights – Israel](#), [Doctors Without Borders](#), the office of the [U.N.'s Special Rapporteur for human rights in the occupied Palestinian Territories](#), and, as noted above, the [Independent International Commission of Inquiry](#).