



STATE OF VERMONT
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 12, 2026

Representative Martin LaLonde, Chair
House Ethics Panel
Vermont House of Representatives
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Response to Ethics Complaint and Request for Closure

Dear Chair LaLonde:

We are writing in response to the Ethics Complaints filed against us with the State Ethics Commission by Elizabeth Blum “on behalf of herself and Jewish Voice for Peace VT/NH Chapter,” which was dated December 31, 2025, and provided to us by the House Ethics Panel on January 15, 2026. As the Complaints appear to be identical and were based on the same alleged conduct, we have opted to submit a joint response. Since our conduct was permissible under the State Code of Ethics and there are no “reasonable grounds to believe that an ethical violation pertaining to the Vermont Constitution or House Rules has occurred,” which is the standard for continuing with an Ethics Complaint under Section 3 of the House Ethics Panel Procedure, we respectfully request that the House Ethics Panel Close this Complaint.

Response to Allegations

The Complaints allege that we violated 3 V.S.A. § 1203g by participating in the “50 States, One Israel” event sponsored by the Israeli Foreign Ministry in September 2025. They also allege that we violated 3 V.S.A. § 1203b because the Israeli government has stated its “desire for legislative actions or outcomes over which the Representative has a measure of control or influence, including a relevant bill pending in the House of Representatives, H.310.” We disagree.

We do not dispute that we all participated in the “50 States, One Israel” event in September 2025. We were five of the approximately 250 state legislators in attendance, representing all 50 states, and our participation was made possible because the Israeli government covered the costs of our travel, lodging, and related expenses. But these gifts were permissible under the State Code of Ethics, despite the Complaints’ claims to the contrary.

Permitted gifts under 3 V.S.A. § 1203g

3 V.S.A. § 1203g(a) provides that “[a] public servant shall not solicit or accept a gift unless permitted under this section.” Despite this general prohibition, it then lists 14 categories of gifts that a public servant may accept, at least two of which are applicable to our situation.

3 V.S.A. § 1203g(a)(7) allows a public servant to “accept free attendance to a widely attended charitable, cultural, political, or civic event at which a public servant participates in the public servant’s official capacity, provided such tickets or admission is provided by the primary sponsoring entity. Free attendance *may include* all or part of the cost of admission; transportation to and from the event; and food, refreshments, entertainment, and instructional materials provided to all event attendees.” (emphasis added) The “50 States, One Israel” event was widely attended and was of a cultural and political nature; we participated in our official capacities as Vermont State Representatives; and our costs were covered by the primary sponsoring entity. In addition, 3 V.S.A. § 1203g(a)(10) allows a public servant to “accept attendance to training or similar events determined to be in the interest of the public servant’s agency or department.” The “50 States, One Israel” event allowed us to gain insight into Israel’s history and culture; learn about current events that may be contributing to increased antisemitism in Vermont and across the United States; discover different ways in which Israel is approaching challenges in areas like agriculture, biotechnology, climate change, and health care, which are all topics affecting Vermont and Vermonters; and express directly to Israeli officials our significant concerns about the situation in Gaza and our hopes for achieving lasting peace in the region.

“Widely attended”

Despite the Complaints’ claim, an event does not need to be open to the public to be “widely attended.” Vermont’s Code of Ethics does not define “widely attended,” but looking to other states’ ethics codes is instructive.

Virginia, for example, defines a widely attended event as “an event at which at least 25 persons have been invited to attend or there is a reasonable expectation that at least 25 persons will attend the event and the event is open to individuals (i) who are members of a public, civic, charitable, or professional organization, (ii) who are from a particular industry or profession, or (iii) who represent persons interested in a particular issue.”¹ New York’s law defines “widely attended event” as “an event: (A) which at least twenty-five individuals other than members, officers, or employees from the governmental entity in which the public official serves attend or were, in good faith, invited to attend, and (B) which is related to the attendee's duties or responsibilities or which allows the public official to perform a ceremonial function appropriate to his or her position.”²

¹ [Va. Code Ann. § 2.2-3103.1.](#)

² [N.Y. Legis. Law § 1-c\(j\)\(ii\).](#)

Neither Virginia’s nor New York’s definition requires an event to be open to the public in order to be considered “widely attended.” We believe the “50 States, One Israel” event does, however, comfortably fit within either state’s definition of being “attended.” Applying the Virginia standard, the event was attended by approximately 250 state legislators from across the United States, which is a significant group of individuals with a commonality of industry or profession, sufficient to meet the criteria of “widely attended.” Applying the New York standard, the event involved at least 25 individuals other than us or anyone else from the Vermont General Assembly and was related to our legislative duties, including informing ourselves on issues that matter to Vermonters.

Even if the Panel does not wish to look to other states’ ethics codes for guidance, we would encourage the Panel to interpret the term “widely attended” by its plain meaning, which does not distinguish between public and private, by invitation or open to everyone, or anything else. Absent clear legislative intent, it is merely speculation to read additional meaning into the term than what is stated in the law.

“Charitable, cultural, political, or civic event”

The “50 States, One Israel” event was both a cultural and political event. The entire event was devoted to learning about Israel, its government, people, economy, culture, history, and future. Among other opportunities, we were able to tour the Knesset, Israel’s parliament, to learn about the comparative governance structures in the United States and Israel and to view the historical and cultural artifacts on display; meet both the President and the Prime Minister of Israel; and visit and participate in a memorial ceremony at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Remembrance Center. The Complaints allege that the “chief purpose” of the event was “lobbying by Israeli government officials, who requested that legislation be enacted in each of the 50 American states to benefit Israel.” It is unclear how the Complainant, who did not participate in the event and appears only to have read promotional materials and subsequent media coverage about it, would be familiar with the event’s “chief purpose,” but we can assure the Panel that there was much more to this trip than lobbying or propaganda. It was a blend of cultural education, historical appreciation, and bipartisan engagement.

In approving the participation of one of our colleagues from Oregon in “50 States, One Israel,” Oregon’s Government Ethics Commission described the trip as providing “a cultural exchange and opportunity to strength intergovernmental relationship between Isreal [*sic*] and members of the Legislative Assembly.”³ We share this view and believe it to be a reasonable description of the event.

³ See <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/chief-clerk/Documents/50%20States%201%20Israel%202025.pdf>

“Official capacity”

Our participation on the “50 States, One Israel” event was in our official capacities as members of the Vermont General Assembly. All attendees were elected members of their state’s legislative bodies, and we were mindful in our interactions that we were there as a bipartisan delegation of members representing the State of Vermont. The Complaint alleges that because we “did not receive an invitation to address the event or fulfill any other official roles,” we could not have been participating in our official capacities. It is unclear on what basis the Complainant developed her litmus test for determining when a public servant is participating in an official capacity or how she would define activities that do “fulfill ... official roles,” but her assertion that our involvement “was not based on responsibilities related to the Vermont legislature” relies on an overly narrow view of the role of a State legislator.

As the letter from the Oregon Government Ethics Commission⁴ described it in approving an Oregon House member’s participation, “[t]he trip aims to connect legislators with communities and prominent Israeli leadership to learn more about potential trade opportunities.” Being a legislator was a primary qualification for participation. In fact, the Complainant undermines her own argument by first claiming that we were invited on the trip “for the purpose of lobbying the Representative[s] to get legislation favorable to the Israeli government adopted in Vermont” and then alleging that we were not participating in our official capacities. It seems clear that we were not invited to participate in this event because we are “Matt from Vergennes” and “Gina from Barre,” but because we are elected members of the Vermont General Assembly. Being a state legislator involves more than showing up in Montpelier from January through May and taking the occasional call from a constituent. In order to learn about the needs and views of our constituents and the issues facing our districts and our state, we participate as elected officials in large and small events throughout the year, from meeting with constituents and advocates to attending local gatherings of business organizations and interest groups; from joining legislators in other states to discuss issues affecting our region to attending national and international conferences and events. “50 States, One Israel” was one of many such events each year in which members of the General Assembly participate.

“Free attendance may include”

As described above, our participation in the “50 States, One Israel” event was allowable under 3 V.S.A. § 1203g(a)(7). That provision also gives a list of examples of what may be included in “free attendance,” a list that begins “Free attendance may include,” and then provides as examples the cost of admission, transportation to and from the event, and food, refreshments, entertainment, and instructional materials provided to all attendees. That list is not a complete inventory of all costs that are permissible, however.

⁴ *Id.*

1 V.S.A. § 145 says that “[t]he terms ‘include,’ ‘includes,’ and ‘including’ mean that the language following the term is illustrative and not exhaustive and shall have the same meaning as though the term were followed by the words ‘but not limited to.’” 1 V.S.A. § 101 tells us that this meaning of “include,” “includes,” and “including” applies across the Vermont Statutes Annotated, “unless such construction is inconsistent with the manifest intent of the General Assembly or repugnant to the context of the same statute.” This means that the list of what constitutes permissible activities related to free attendance at an event under 3 V.S.A. § 1203g(a)(7) is not limited only to the items on the list, but should be read as “may include, but is not listed to.” While lodging is not specifically enumerated on the list, it is also not specifically prohibited, and lodging is a logical extension of receiving transportation and food in the context of a multiday event. If the General Assembly intended to exclude lodging from the list of permitted gifts, it would have stated so explicitly. The canon of statutory construction providing that an exclusive list reflects legislative intent to exclude anything not on the list does not apply when the list is inexhaustive. The use of the words “may include” means that other expenses are permissible, as well, so accepting lodging in connection with our participation in the event did not specifically violate the Code of Ethics.

In addition, the Complaints make irrelevant claims about the perceived value of the accommodations provided and what levels of accommodations would be permissible under the Code of Ethics that have no basis in the Code, Vermont law, or House Rules. Some of the claims are misleading, as well. For example, while our travel to and from Israel was on “chartered” flights for all of the legislator participants, that does not mean we were flying on luxurious private jets. A “chartered flight” just means a flight that is not part of an airline’s published schedule; chartered flights are not uncommon for a large group and are typically organized by a group, company, or tour operator.⁵ In our case, the Israeli government arranged for round trip flights between New York’s JFK International Airport and Tel Aviv’s Ben Gurion Airport on El Al, a commercial airline, with all participants traveling on the same plane in order to provide additional security for the 250 American state officials traveling to Israel and to ensure we all arrived in the country at the same time. This is neither unusual nor unethical. As noted on pages A-4 and A-5 of the Complaints’ appendices, our outbound flight was on El Al flight LY14 and our return flight was El Al flight LY3.⁶ There was nothing “extravagant” about sitting in economy seats on a commercial jet for 10-plus hours each way. The Complainant is attempting to fabricate a narrative without actual knowledge of the events.

The Complaints also allege that the itinerary we received “advised [us] that [we] would be spending the first two nights of their visit at a luxury, 5-star hotel in Jerusalem and the final two nights at a luxury, 5-star hotel in Tel Aviv. Nothing in Vermont law allows such an extravagant lodging gift.” This is not accurate. First, the itinerary we received said only “Arrive at hotel (King David and Inbal)” for the

⁵ Per U.S. Department of Transportation, Aviation Consumer Protection, see <https://www.transportation.gov/individuals/aviation-consumer-protection/charter-flights>.

⁶ The itinerary erroneously stated that Flight 14 was from Boston; it was actually from New York/JFK.

day of our arrival and “Arrive at Hotel, Tel Aviv (Dan Tel Aviv or The Jaffa)” for September 16; it did not “advise” us that we would be staying in a “luxury, 5-star hotel.” Those embellishments are the Complainant’s own additions. Second, we were not involved in selecting the hotels where we stayed for the “50 States, One Israel” event, and while they were nice hotels and provided enhanced security protocols for our protection, nothing in Vermont law specifies the level of lodging that is or is not permitted for public servants’ accommodations. The Complainant is editorializing in the service of her preferred narrative without a legal foundation for her claims.

Finally, the Complaints allege that 3 V.S.A. § 1203g(a)(7) does not “allow gifts unrelated to the event itself, such as site-seeing [*sic*] and tourist activities.” As explained above, the statutory list of gifts permitted in connection with attendance at an event is an inexhaustive list. We disagree with the assertion that observing sites of historical and cultural significance and learning about Israel, its history, and its people were unrelated to the event itself—those were integral parts of the event. In addition, the list itself includes “entertainment” as an example of a permissible gift, so to the extent the Complainant’s objection to our participation in educational and cultural events is based on a perception that they were more recreational than substantive, we contend those activities are analogous to entertainment as contemplated by the Code of Ethics.

Training and education

3 V.S.A. § 1203g(a)(10) creates a separate gift exception for “training and education,” allowing a public servant to accept “attendance to training or similar events determined to be in the interest of the public servant’s agency or department.” The Complaints say that the “50 States, One Israel” event “cannot legitimately be characterized as training or education.” That is the Complainant’s subjective opinion, but there were significant educational components to the entire trip, as we learned about Israel’s history and culture, heard directly from Arab and Jewish residents of Israel about their experiences and perspectives, and gained a new understanding of the impacts of the situation in Gaza. The invitation to the event from the Consulate General of Israel to New England described the event as “an in-depth exploration of Israel’s leadership, society, heritage and spirit of innovation.” It offered participants the chance to “gain firsthand insight into the complexities and opportunities facing Israel today through high-level meetings with Israeli decision-makers, site visits to key national and cultural landmarks in Jerusalem and beyond, and direct engagement with experts in political, social, and academic fields.” We all found the trip to be quite enlightening and educational.

The Complaints also say the event was not “in the interest” of the Vermont General Assembly, but we disagree. As elected members of the General Assembly, we do our best to educate ourselves on issues of importance to our constituents and to represent their interests in Montpelier. This means learning about issues that matter to our constituents and that affect Vermont and Vermonters. While the event may not have been in the interest of the Complainant or her organization, it was in the interest of

many of our constituents and provided us with new perspectives to bring to our colleagues and to our legislative work. It also provided us with connections to other state legislators that we can use to help bring new ideas and collaborative approaches to our legislating. The Complainant is not the arbiter of what constitutes education that is in the interest of Vermont, Vermonters, or the Vermont General Assembly.

Benefits of participation

The Complaint also alleges that “no benefits of the event have accrued to the State of Vermont or to the people of Vermont, including the hundreds of Vermont members of the Jewish Voice for Peace VT-NH chapter” and that “[t]he only beneficiaries were the Representatives in attendance and the government of Israel.” These claims are baseless. First, the trip was in September, so it has been less than five months since we returned. It is both premature to declare the window within which benefits of the event may accrue to the State to be closed and nearly impossible to conclusively prove or disprove. Some of the benefits of the trip are the connections we made with legislative colleagues from other states, whose efforts in their states we can use to further our legislative work in Vermont. Other benefits may come in the form of ideas for agricultural, technological, and other economic innovations that we learned about in Israel and can consider for potential exploration or implementation in Vermont. Another benefit is the strengthening of our own relationships with each other as members of different parties from different backgrounds and committee assignments, which enhances collegiality in the House of Representatives and is a potential platform for us to pursue bipartisan legislation in this or a future legislative session.

Second, it would be absurd to judge the ethics of any individual action based on whether any “benefits of the event have accrued to ... the hundreds of Vermont members of the Jewish Voice for Peace VT-NH chapter” or to any other specific organization. We sincerely hope the Panel will recognize the ridiculousness of this self-interested allegation. If the test for whether a legislator’s activities were unethical was whether the benefits of each activity accrued to each organization or interest group in Vermont, it would be impossible for the General Assembly to function. Few, if any, actions by any individual legislator or group of legislators could reasonably be considered to provide a benefit to every interest group, because many groups have interests that are in conflict with each other.

Third, our participation in the event was beneficial to more than just us and arguably to the government of Israel. We understand that our participation in the “50 States, One Israel” event did not please the Complainant, her organization, or the Vermont Coalition for the Liberation of Palestine, of which her organization is a member.⁷ But they do not speak for all Vermonters. In fact, in addition to emails expressing disapproval following our trip, we also received emails from constituents and other Vermont residents who thanked us for our interest in learning more about Israel and the complex political and ideological environment of the Middle East, expressed their

⁷ See images from <https://www.vermontcpl.org/about> in Appendix A.

gratitude for our willingness to witness the situation in Israel firsthand, shared their appreciation for our support of our Jewish constituents, and encouraged us to protect against rising antisemitism here in Vermont. The Complainant does not speak for all Vermonters, and her personal or organizational dissatisfaction with our actions does not transform them into ethical violations.

No appearance of unethical conduct

3 V.S.A. § 1203b directs public servants to “avoid any actions creating the appearance that the public servant is violating the Code of Ethics.” It says that whether particular circumstances create the appearance of a violation “shall be determined from the perspective of a reasonable individual with knowledge of the relevant facts.” The Complaints say that their allegation of the appearance of unethical conduct “stems from the Representative’s acceptance of gifts tied directly to lobbying activities of the gift-giver (the State of Israel), and the gift-giver’s stated desire for legislative actions or outcomes over which this Representative has or could have a measure of influence or control, including future anti-BDS initiatives and proposed initiatives in Israel, and passage of a bill now pending in the Vermont House of Representative, H.310.” The Complaints cite “certain reporters” who published articles after we returned from the event as speculating that “Israel expected legislative payback from the Representative – and from the Representative’s colleagues at the event.” The Complaints describe the editorial board of the Valley News as saying that Israel had a “desired quid pro quo.”

The Complaints also discuss H.310 (An act relating to education on the evolving nature of antisemitism), a bill that four of the five of us co-sponsored, along with 29 of our colleagues, and was introduced in January 2025. The bill has not been taken up by the House Committee on Education, to which it was referred. Nonetheless, H.310, the Complaints posit, *if* passed in its current form by the House and Senate and signed by the Governor, *could* be implemented in ways that the Complainant finds objectionable. The very existence of this bill, the Complaints say, which was introduced months before we were invited to participate in the “50 States, One Israel” event and has stayed on the wall ever since, “creates the appearance of a violation of Vermont’s Code of Ethics.”

None of these allegations is sufficient to reasonably constitute an appearance of unethical conduct.

International travel by Vermont legislators

Part of the Complaints’ objections to our participation in the “50 States, One Israel” event seem to be based on a misperception of the regularity with which members of the Vermont General Assembly travel internationally and domestically at the invitation and expense of foreign governments and interest groups. Among us, we are personally aware of paid travel by Vermont legislators in recent years to countries including China, Iceland, Israel, Taiwan, Turkey, Ukraine, and the United Arab

Emirates. The main difference between these trips and our September 2025 trip to Israel is that the other trips garnered little to no media attention. But a knowledge of the relevant facts with which to judge our conduct includes understanding that international travel by Vermont legislators is fairly common.

In addition, several of us spoke about our upcoming participation in the “50 States, One Israel” event with our Vermont legislative colleagues in advance of our trip, including with members of House leadership. No one raised any concerns about whether the travel was permissible or otherwise expressed surprise or alarm, because this kind of trip is not unusual for Vermont legislators. As House Republican Leader, Representative Pattie McCoy, put it after our return:

The most recent bi-partisan international trip of five Vermont State Representatives has garnered much attention. This is not the first international trip taken by Vermont State Representatives and it will not be the last. We support State Representatives who reach out and travel to engage in, and build, international relations. Through these efforts Vermont has built business partners that continue to increase our economic presence globally, allowing Vermont businesses to grow and thrive.⁸

Free travel is explicitly permitted by the 3 V.S.A. § 1203g(a)(7); it is inapposite to allege the appearance of unethical conduct when the conduct itself is expressly allowed. It seems the Complainant objects less to the fact of our travel than to the specific destination.

Media coverage, political motivations, and calls for our resignation

As we noted above, our trip to Israel generated a significant amount of media attention following our return and throughout the fall and winter. Some of that attention, however, was the direct result of actions by the Complainant’s own organization and others in the Vermont Coalition for Palestinian Liberation to keep a focus on their objections to Israel and our participation in the “50 States, One Israel” event. These efforts include a press conference they held in the Cedar Creek Room on the first day of the 2026 legislative session in which they called on us to resign from the General Assembly and announced that they had filed these Complaints.⁹ The petition they put on the Coalition’s website criticizes us because the organizers of the “50 States, One Israel” event did not include meetings with specific organizations that the Coalition would have preferred we meet with, accuses us of “implicat[ing] our state in one of the greatest crimes against humanity in history,” and criticizes H.310 while promoting their preferred bill, H.168.¹⁰

⁸ See, e.g., https://www.reformer.com/news/state/group-files-ethics-complaint-against-greer-other-reps-over-israel-trip/article_92de6401-a4f5-4035-8270-aa7306995bf4.html

⁹ See, e.g., <https://vtdigger.org/2026/01/06/jewish-group-files-ethics-complaints-against-vermont-legislators-who-took-paid-trip-to-israel/>

¹⁰ See petition here <https://www.vermontcpl.org/five> and in Appendix B.

It also bears noting that we were not responsible for the comments made by any individual speaker during the event. We were aware of the identities of some of the presenters in advance because their names or titles were on the itinerary, but we did not preview their remarks or have advance knowledge of what they would say. So, when the Complaints or the media quote Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar as encouraging the legislators attending the event to oppose anti-boycott, divestment, and sanctions legislation and to “ensure your home states have laws to protect Israel,” they are holding us responsible after the fact based on the content of others’ speech, over which we had no control. Just because a speaker said something does not mean that we agreed with it, let alone that we would act on it. Attributing others’ comments to us in any way because we were present when they were said is unreasonable and should not be used as the basis for a determination that we created an appearance of unethical conduct.

H.310

Finally, the Complaints criticize H.310, a bill that four of the five of us cosponsored in January 2025 as part of a bipartisan group of 33 Representatives. The Complaints place this criticism under the heading “H.310 and the Appearance of Unethical Conduct” but fail to allege any specific unethical conduct other than the Complainant’s general opposition to the bill as introduced. The Complaints claim that “H.310, if enacted, would help advance the legislative goals lobbied for at the ‘50 States, One Israel’ event.” It seems that the Complainant may be trying to create the perception of a quid pro quo, but this allegation does not hold up under its own weight. First, the bill was introduced months before we had ever heard of or been invited to participate in the event, so it cannot be a quid pro quo—that is, we cannot have introduced a bill in January 2025 in response to “lobbying” in September 2025. Second, as members of the House of Representatives, we are permitted to propose any legislation that we do not find to be injurious to the people, regardless of whether any individual Vermonter or their organization agrees with it.¹¹ Third, the bill is still on the wall in House Education, with no indication it will be taken up this session, let alone passed as introduced, so any allegation based on potential action on the bill is highly speculative. Finally, for the bill to be passed would require the concurrence of at least a majority of the members of both chambers present and voting, as well as the Governor. The Complaint alleges that we “ha[ve] or could have a measure of influence or control” over future legislative actions or outcomes, but even that is an overstatement of our individual ability to affect the outcome of legislation referred to a committee on which none of us even sits. The mere existence of a bill that we (all except Representative Gregoire) cosponsored months before we were invited to Israel cannot not serve as the basis for an allegation that we created an appearance of unethical conduct.

¹¹ Vt. Const. Ch. II, § 16.

Conclusion and Request for Closure

The question for the House Ethics Panel is not whether other colleagues would have opted to participate in the “50 States, One Israel” event if invited or whether our trip sent the “right” message about our views on the situation in Israel. The question is whether our participation violated the Code of Ethics, the House Rules, or the Vermont Constitution, and the answer to that question is clearly no. Our trip was permitted under the Code of Ethics, represented a common practice of legislator travel that did not incur taxpayer expense, and gave us a greater understanding of the history, culture, and current realities in Israel that can inform our legislative work and our representation of our constituents.

Under Sec. 3(A) of the House Ethics Panel Procedure, the Ethics Panel must close a complaint unless there are reasonable grounds to believe that an ethical violation has occurred. Nothing in the Complaints demonstrates “reasonable grounds to believe that an ethical violation pertaining to the Vermont Constitution or House Rules has occurred.” For these reasons, we respectfully request that the Complaints against each of us be closed.

Sincerely,

Representative Sarita Austin

Representative Matthew Birong

Representative Gina Galfetti

Representative William Greer

Representative James Gregoire

Appendix A

The Vermont Coalition for Palestinian Liberation (VCPL) is a collaboration of several Vermont organizations and hundreds of Vermont residents working together for a **FREE PALESTINE**.

VCPL Demands

- Ceasefire now
- Stop Israel's genocide and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians
- Provide unrestricted humanitarian aid to all Palestinians
- Free all Palestinian prisoners and hostages
- Defend the civil rights of Palestinians and Palestine solidarity activists
- Stop all U.S. aid to Israel
- Enforce boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel
- End Israel's siege, occupation, and apartheid system
- Equal rights for Palestinians, including but not limited to Palestinians' right to self-determination and right to return

Member organizations:

- [Central Vermont Democratic Socialists of America](#)
- [Green Mountain Democratic Socialists of America](#)
- [Cooperation Vermont](#)
- [Jewish Voice for Peace Vermont/New Hampshire](#)
- [Lost River Racial Justice](#)
- [Party for Socialism and Liberation Vermont](#)
- [Southern Vermont for Palestine](#)
- [Tempest Collective](#)
- [Upper Valley for Palestine](#)
- [UVM Students for Justice in Palestine](#)
- [Vermonters for Justice in Palestine](#)
- [Vermont Law and Graduate School National Lawyers Guild Chapter](#)

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[Vermonters for Justice in Palestine](#)

Vermont Law and Graduate School National Lawyers Guild Chapter

[Vermont Peace/Antiwar Coalition](#)

Appendix B

www.vermontcp.org/five
70%
Search

Sign the Petition

We the undersigned call for the resignation of [Will Greer](#) (D - Bennington-2), [Matthew Birong](#) (D - Addison-3), [James Gregoire](#) (R - Franklin-6), [Sarah "Sarita" Austin](#) (D - Chittenden-19), and [Gina Galfetti](#) (R - Washington-Orange). These five state legislators joined the "50 States, One Israel" trip to an apartheid state that is carrying out genocide in Gaza. They planted a Vermont flag on a [destroyed Palestinian village](#), tying our state to occupation, dispossession, and ethnic cleansing.

All their expenses—flights, housing, and food—were paid for by the Israeli state. The five claimed their trip was a "fact finding mission." It was nothing of the sort. They did not meet with any Israeli human rights organizations like [B'Tselem](#) or international ones like [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Amnesty International](#), let alone Palestinian representatives or [scholars](#). All these would have welcomed the opportunity to educate the legislators about Israel's history of colonization, ethnic cleansing, and apartheid as well as the genocide it is committing today. But instead, the five met exclusively with Israeli government officials and propagandists.

Benjamin Netanyahu's government, in consultation with the Zionist [Shalom Alliance](#), chose these politicians because they support Israel's genocidal war. His representatives gave them talking points to justify mass murder, which they repeated in [interviews](#) and on [Vermont Edition](#), instructed them to campaign against Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions legislation, and encouraged them to introduce bills that define any criticism of the state of Israel as antisemitic.

They will no doubt follow their instructions. Four of the five are already sponsors of a bill, H.310, crafted by the Shalom Alliance. They claim the bill combats antisemitism in schools, a laudable goal that any anti-racist would support. But the bill does not do this. Instead, it mandates that teachers and students conform to a pro-Israel narrative, which defines Jews as Palestine's indigenous people, effectively turning its actual indigenous people, Palestinians, into settlers or undocumented immigrants deserving of expulsion. It would thus require schools to promote [Israeli apartheid](#), which denies equal rights for Palestinians within its borders and occupied territories.

These legislators do not represent the majority of Vermonters but are part of a shrinking Zionist minority. No person of conscience would have tolerated such a trip to South Africa under apartheid or to Germany amidst the Holocaust. So, we should not tolerate this trip to a pariah state violating [Jewish values](#), killing tens of thousands of Palestinians, and destroying their homes, schools, and hospitals. **These five legislators have implicated our state in one of the greatest crimes against humanity in history. All five should resign immediately.**

We encourage everyone else in the statehouse to set an alternative and positive example by endorsing and voting for H.168, which would protect our first amendment rights, and also the proposed Apartheid Free Communities bill. Such legislation can redeem the state's reputation, a proud one set by its opposition to apartheid in South Africa. Now, amidst a genocide, we owe the same to the Palestinian people.