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HEIDI R. METCALF
SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE GOVERNOR
FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT

OFFICE OF GOVERNOR GEORGE ALLEN
STATE CAPITOL
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23219

(804) 786-2211
Ext. 346

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Virginia-Israel Advisory Board
State Capitol
Richmond, Virginia 23227
(804)786-2211

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable George Allen
The Honorable Donald S. Beyer, Jr.
The Honorable Richard Cullen
The Honorable Thomas W. Moss, Jr.
The Honorable John H. Chichester
The Honorable V. Earl Dickinson
The Honorable Stanley C. Walker

FROM: Mr. Mel Chaskin
Chairman, Virginia-Israel Advisory Board

DATE: August 1, 1997

RE: Year End Report of the Virginia-Israel Advisory Board

The past year has been an extremely successful one for the Virginia-Israel Advisory Board. The Board was productive and achieved several remarkable goals. The Board continues to be an effective means of enhancing the relationship between Virginia and Israel.

This memorandum outlines the major activities of the Virginia-Israel Advisory Board during the 1997 fiscal year.

Board Meetings

The Board met three times during the 1997 fiscal year. The first meeting was held on July 25, 1997 in Richmond. At that meeting, I was elected Chairman and Richard Arenstein of Richmond was elected Vice-Chairman. The Board also heard a report from the Governor's Office concerning the Governor's mission to Israel, as well as a report concerning the activities of previous Virginia-Israel commissions.

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The Board met again in Richmond on October 2, 1996. The meeting focused almost entirely on the Governor's mission to Israel. Board members made recommendations regarding the Governor's itinerary. The Board also discussed the Virginia-Israel teacher exchange planned for May of 1997.

On May 6, 1997, the Virginia-Israel Advisory Board met in Richmond. During this meeting the Board was briefed on the Governor's mission to Israel. The board members were pleased to hear that the Governor had a successful mission. After a lengthy discussion, the Board unanimously passed a resolution supporting Israel Aircraft Industries in their request for authorization from the United States Congress to launch commercial space flights from Wallop's Island. In a final action during the meeting, the Board outlined goals for the 1998 fiscal year.

The Governor's Mission to Israel

Governor Allen led a trade and cultural mission to Israel in November of 1996. This mission included business and cultural leaders from across the Commonwealth. During the five-day mission, the Governor met with leaders in the Israeli government including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Mr. Ariel Sharon and Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert. The Governor also met with numerous business executives including the Israeli industrialist Benny Gaon. The Governor promoted Virginia as a great location in which to invest, as well as travel for pleasure. Several of the companies the Governor met with are currently working with the staff of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership to explore the possibility of investing in Virginia. The Israeli Aircraft Industries is actively seeking a commercial space flight launch facility in Virginia.

A highlight of the trip was the Governor's participation in a ceremony dedicating a street in the Israeli town of Beit Shemesh. The street, dedicated "Virginia Street" leads into a major industrial park. This street is the result of a long-standing relationship between the Greater Washington UJA and the Beit Shemesh.

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The Governor and his party made visits to Yad V'Shem, Old Jerusalem and the Mount Herzl Cemetery. At the cemetery, the Governor laid a wreath on the grave of fallen Israeli Prime Minister Rabin. Additionally, the Governor announced a teacher exchange between the Commonwealth of Virginia and the State of Israel.

The members of the Virginia-Israel Advisory Board are pleased with the success of the Governor's mission to Israel. It is our sincere hope that the next Governor will also lead a mission of leaders in trade, education and culture to Israel during his term.

Teacher Exchange

The Virginia- Israel Advisory Board, Virginia-Israel Foundation, Old Dominion University and the Virginia Department of Education sponsored a social studies teacher exchange in Israel from May 2-May 11, 1997. Sixteen middle and high school social studies teachers from across the Commonwealth participated in the program. School division represented by teachers in the program included Fairfax, Stafford, Henrico, Chesterfield, Botetourt, Cumberland, Montgomery, Roanoke, Brunswick, Charlotte and Williamsburg. The Israeli Ministry of Education served as hosts of the group under the provisions of the agreement signed by the Governor during his mission to Israel in November of 1996.

The purpose of the exchange was to focus on Virginia's History and Social Science Standards of Learning through on-site lectures and classroom observations in Israel. In addition to school visits, the teachers participated in discussions arranged by the Israeli Ministry of Education, visited historic sites, and toured Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, and Tel Aviv. The exchange concentrated on four major themes in Virginia's new History and Social Science Standards of Learning: ancient civilizations, major religions, the Holocaust, and modern Middle Eastern politics and geography.

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Priorities for 1998

During the May 6, 1997, meeting, the Virginia-Israel Advisory Board approved several projects to pursue during the 1998 fiscal year. The Board will continue to support a mission to Israel by the Governor elected in November of 1997. The Board will also work with the Virginia Department of Education to continue the teacher exchange in 1998.

The Board will be focusing its efforts on promoting commerce and trade between Israel and Virginia during 1998. Projects the Board will be working on will include the development of a site on the world wide web encouraging Israelis to consider Virginia as a place to invest; laying the foundation for hiring a full time economic development official in Virginia to work with Virginia businesses seeking to trade in the Israeli market, and hiring a part-time representative in Israel to assist Israeli businesses seeking to invest in Virginia.

The members of the Virginia-Israel Advisory are unanimous in their view that the first year of the Board has been a very productive one. We feel that with continued support from the Governor and the General Assembly the relationship between Israel and Virginia can continue to expand and we look forward to working with you over the next year.