

Policy Conference 2013

Irene Inouye

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3 **[Begin Irene Inouye]**

4 21:25:25

5 I want to thank you, Esther, for that wonderful tribute and a big thank-you to AIPAC. As
6 you know, Dan truly loved being part of AIPAC's Policy Conference each year, and for
7 more than 50 years in the U.S. Senate he fought for strong U.S.-Israel relationships. He --
8 (applause.) He had treasured the friendships that he formed with so many of you in this
9 room and felt a very special connection to the state of Israel. Dan especially felt a special
10 kinship with the Jewish people. In fact, one of our last congressional trips together was
11 last summer to Israel.

12 21:26:14

13 The very beginnings of that special bond began while recovering from his wounds in an
14 army hospital in World War II. Wounded in Italy, he spent nearly two years recovering
15 and preparing to reenter the world. It was during that time that he met a young lieutenant
16 who was wounded while fighting in Germany. The soldier who was next to him in his
17 bedside told Dan about the concentration camps, how he had seen bodies stacked like
18 cordwood. Dan didn't understand. He asked the soldier, what have these people done to
19 deserve such a fate? And the lieutenant said, they were Jews. You know that nobody likes
20 the Jews.

21 21:27:07

22 Dan was stunned and could not believe what he heard and was so typical of day, he began
23 studying the history of the Jews. He learned that the persecution of the Jews began long
24 before the Holocaust. He read about the crusades. He studied the Torah. The response
25 from that young soldier haunted him for the rest of his life, and Dan became inspired with

26 the strength and the resilience of the Jewish people. He vowed that he would always
27 stand up for Israel. (Applause.)

28 21:27:54

29 As a Japanese-American who fought racial prejudice himself to earn the right to fight for
30 his country, he knew what it was to be hated because of his culture and the community
31 that he came from. Following December 7th, 1941 he was declared an enemy alien by the
32 United States government, and, along with other Japanese-Americans, petitioned our U.S.
33 government for the right to put on the uniform and to fight for his country. He would rise
34 to become the president pro-tem of the United States Senate, third in line to succeed the
35 president. (Applause.)

36 21:28:45

37 He would often say that only in the United States of America would that be possible. So
38 for Dan, the keeping of America and Israel strong together was part of a lifelong pledge.
39 Dan left us late last year, but I know that he would have wanted all of us to continue to
40 work together to carry on his legacy and to fight for the betterment of Israel and the
41 United States. (Applause.)

42 21:29:22

43 Dan wanted the same thing for both countries. He wanted peace. So let us hope that we
44 can achieve that vision which alluded him in his lifetime. I know that, if we can continue
45 to work together and to come together, that we will achieve that mission. I thank you for
46 this wonderful tribute and aloha. (Applause.)

47 **[End Irene Inouye]**