

Dear Senator Sanders,

We the undersigned individuals and organizations wish to congratulate you on your selection as the winner of the 2025 Eugene V. Debs Award.

Gene Debs holds a special place of honor in American history. He did not spring from his mother's womb fully formed. His political outlook took shape through bitter struggle and changed in response to unfolding events. As a mature politician, he devoted himself to the cause of peace. When the USA entered World War I, Debs spoke out against it even though it meant going to prison. Against leading members of his own Socialist Party, Debs vociferously supported the struggles of people around the world to free themselves from oppression. Through his actions he cemented his place in the memory of people everywhere as a defender of freedom, justice, and equality.

You have studied the life and works of Debs deeply, and in your long political career have worked to uphold his values. Right now, those values face a critical test. The state of Israel is perpetrating what you yourself have called a "gross violation of US and international law"¹ and many governments, non-governmental organizations, political parties, and activists around the world have deemed to be a genocide.²

Senator Sanders, you have been vocal in your denunciation of the actions of the state of Israel. You have spoken out against the refusal of Israel to allow humanitarian aid into Gaza, rightly saying that "[w]hat is going on in Gaza is a war crime, committed openly and in broad daylight, and continuing every single day ... This is methodical, it is intentional, it is the stated policy of the Netanyahu government."³ We agree with you when you point out, "The United States has already provided hundreds of billions of dollars to Israel over the decades. Last year alone, the U.S. taxpayers provided more than \$22 billion in military aid to Israel. All while we have people in this country sleeping out on the street, unable to afford healthcare or other basic necessities. Enough is enough."⁴

Nevertheless, you have continued to make a distinction between what you call "offensive" and "defensive" weapons.⁵ Although you have supported S.J.34 and S.J.31 to ban the sale of

¹<https://www.sanders.senate.gov/in-the-news/sen-bernie-sanders-has-become-a-leading-critic-of-israels-war-in-gaza/>

² [editor's note: in a [statement](#) released after the ratification of this letter, Senator Sanders recognizes the actions of Israel as constituting genocide.-GLDSA, 9/20/25]

³<https://www.sanders.senate.gov/press-releases/prepared-remarks-sanders-confronts-congress-silence-on-gaza/>

⁴<https://www.sanders.senate.gov/op-eds/the-united-states-must-not-be-part-of-israels-unlawful-war-on-iran/>

⁵<https://www.sanders.senate.gov/press-releases/prepared-remarks-sanders-forces-vote-to-stop-arms-sales-to-israel-amid-starvation-in-gaza/>

certain weapons to Israel, you have continued to support funding for the so-called “Iron Dome”.⁶ This position is morally and intellectually untenable. Any arms shipments to a government engaged in genocide are, simply put, unacceptable. As congresswoman Rashida Tlaib has recently said, “weapons are weapons”.⁷

Standing before a judge facing imprisonment for his opposition to war, Debs declared “while there is a lower class, I am in it, while there is a criminal element, I am of it, and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free.” There can be no doubt where Debs himself would have stood in this moment.

Accordingly, we call upon you to use your speech this year at the banquet named in Eugene Debs’ honor to **announce your support for a total and unconditional ban on the US export of arms to the state of Israel.**

In solidarity,

Greater Lafayette (Indiana) DSA; Northwest Indiana DSA; Central Indiana DSA; Bloomington Indiana DSA; Inland Empire DSA; Chicago DSA; Seattle DSA; Richmond DSA; Pittsburgh DSA; Twin Cities DSA; Louisville DSA; Long Island DSA; Sonoma County DSA; DSA North Texas; Metro DC DSA; Green Mountain DSA; Central Jersey DSA; DSA Metro Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky; Mid-Hudson Valley DSA; Madison Area DSA; Northwest Ohio DSA; Connecticut DSA; Boulder DSA; Lakefront DSA; Philadelphia DSA; DSA Salina; Akron DSA; Denver DSA; South Jersey DSA; Metro Detroit DSA; North New Jersey DSA; NC Triangle DSA; Palm Beach County DSA; Portland DSA; Boston DSA; Orange County DSA; Palouse DSA; Troy DSA; DSA Eugene; DSA SF; Capital District DSA; Mid-Missouri DSA; Tacoma & Pierce County DSA; DSA San Diego; San Antonio DSA; Orlando DSA; DSA Frederick; New Orleans DSA; Dayton-Miami Valley DSA; Columbus DSA; Southern Maryland DSA; Twin Ports DSA; Greater Baltimore DSA; Savannah GA DSA; Rochester DSA; St Louis DSA; DSA Sacramento; Maine DSA; River Valley DSA; Kansas City DSA; DSA Los Angeles; Milwaukee DSA; Pensacola DSA; Flint Hills DSA; DSA Cleveland; Olympia DSA; Shreveport-Bossier DSA; Charlotte Metro DSA; North Alabama DSA; East Bay DSA; Central Iowa DSA; Lehigh Valley DSA; Las Vegas DSA; West Suburban Illinois DSA; Southern Idaho DSA; Oklahoma City DSA; Tidewater DSA; Chattanooga DSA; Asheville DSA; Southern New Hampshire DSA; Owensboro DSA Organizing Committee; Southeast Idaho DSA; Wilmington DSA

Purdue University YDSA; Ball State University YDSA; Indiana University Bloomington YDSA; University of Minnesota Duluth YDSA; Virginia Tech YDSA; San Francisco State University

⁶<https://www.sanders.senate.gov/press-releases/prepared-remarks-sanders-on-ending-unfettered-military-aid-to-israel-and-restoring-unrwa-funding/>

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0BYHdRe2b8>

YDSA; Macalester College YDSA; YDSA Boise State; University of Louisville YDSA; YDSA at Appalachian State University; YDSA Hunter College; University of Missouri Kansas City YDSA; YDSA UC Merced; University of Houston YDSA; YDSA Georgia Tech; Idaho State University YDSA; Kennesaw State University YDSA

Jesse Brown, City-County Councilor, Indianapolis-Marion County, District 13

Councilman JP Lyninger, Louisville Metro Council D6

Erin Evans, PhD, San Diego County Board of Education, District 4

Alderman Alex Brower, 3rd District, Milwaukee Common Council

Wes Pelletier, District 2 City Councilor, Portland, Maine

Kate Logan, State Representative, Chittenden-16 District (Burlington), Vermont House of Representatives

Rachel Ventura, IL State Senator, District 43

Dan Bailey, Milton Township Clerk

Rep. Ryan Clancy, 19th Assembly District, WI

Rossana Rodriguez, 33rd Ward Alderwoman, Chicago City Council

Anthony Quezada, 35th Ward Alderman, Chicago City Council

Jewish Voice For Peace - Indiana

Jewish Voice for Peace - Central Ohio

Purdue University Students for Justice in Palestine