

Lincoln, NE – Congressman Jeff Fortenberry today released the following remarks regarding President Obama's speech on the Middle East.

"President Obama's speech significantly reframed America's disposition toward North Africa and the Middle East. I believe he appropriately stressed that the philosophical underpinnings of just and free societies are respect for human rights and the rule of law, and placed a noteworthy emphasis on religious freedom.

"The President alluded to this moment as a historic opportunity to align U.S. values with the dignity of individuals throughout the region struggling for fundamental human rights. As the fledgling vanguard of the Arab Spring, the people of Tunisia and Egypt have an opportunity to develop just governance structures to meet their basic needs, protect all persons, and set an example for the nations of the region.

"The speech comes at a time when Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are falling apart, Syria and Libya are unleashing terror against their own people, and Iran continues its march toward nuclear weapons capability. The President leveraged this moment of uncertainty to assert a new American initiative for the region based upon a fuller defining of interests. Starting with a higher vision based upon the universal desires of all persons, he laid a good foundation to address divisions that cross millennia. Absent from the speech were challenges to other superpowers such as China and Russia who are content to exploit our leadership and sacrifice for their own geo-political conniving and mercantilistic expansionism.

"At a constituent meeting in Seward, Nebraska, recently, I was asked why the United States must be the world's policeman. This is an important question that resonates with many Americans - especially in difficult economic times at home. The President would be well served to aggressively address America's economic debt burden with equal vigor, while we provide the necessary global leadership for the sake of the future of humanity."

Fortenberry is a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia.

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