

Obama's position on Israel concerns Jews

by UPI

BOYNTON BEACH, Fla. -- American Jews, one constituency on which Democrats rely for support, say they're conflicted about Sen. Barack Obama as a potential presidential candidate. Younger members of this key voting bloc support Obama, D-Ill., who won 45 percent of the Jewish vote in primaries, but in recent presidential elections, Jews have moved more to the right, The New York Times reported Thursday. Resistance to Obama seems to be grounded in his commitment to Israel, dozens of Jews living in Florida told the Times. "The people here, liberal people, will not vote for Obama because of his attitude towards Israel," Shirley Weitz, 83, of Boynton Beach, Fla., said. If he becomes the party's nominee, Obama needs the Jewish vote, particularly in Florida where Jews are about 5 percent of voters. Jews view Obama two ways, said Rabbi David Saperstein of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism in Washington. When viewed as a scholar, Obama is seen as social justice advocate and a defender of Israel, Saperstein said. The other view, however, is tempered by the controversy surrounding his vitriolic former pastor, raising questions about his support for Israel. "It's too early to know how they will play out," Rabbi Saperstein said.

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