



# PROJECT *on* Middle East Democracy

www.pomed.org ♦ P.O. Box 25533 ♦ Washington, DC 20027-8533

---

Georgetown University Mortara Center for International Studies

## **U.S. Senator Russell Feingold: “Promoting Democracy, Development and Diplomacy: U.S. Interests and Values”**

Gaston Hall, 15 September 2008, 10:30am

The Mortara Center for International Studies at Georgetown University hosted **U.S. Senator Russell Feingold** (D-WI) to deliver the 2008 Goldman Sachs Distinguished Lecture. He was introduced by **Dr. Carol Lancaster**, Director of the Mortara Center, and **Dr. John J. DeGioia**, President of Georgetown University.

Senator Feingold began by stressing the importance of promoting democracy and rule of law throughout the world. He said it aligns with the United States’ core national values, its image, and its aspirations. **He then lamented the gap between the lofty rhetoric of the Bush administration’s Freedom Agenda and the absence of meaningful actions to support it.** He argued that this gap has allowed others to accuse the U.S. of hypocrisy and cynicism. **He said the Iraq war has also deeply undermined our ability to advance the democracy agenda.** He said the war was a “seriously mistaken strategic decision,” as it weakened our economy, our national security, and drained our military. He said that incidences such as Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, and illegal wiretapping at home have undermined our ability to claim we stand for the rights of others. **Despite these setbacks, Sen. Feingold believes that while our mature democracy is not transferable whole cloth, the principles it embodies can and should be shared.**

Senator Feingold then discussed the gap between our international goals and the tools we use to achieve them. **He said the terrorism threat cannot be defeated solely through military means, and that the problem is that Muslim masses have no legitimate political outlet and the vacuum is filled by extremists. He said that promoting political reform and rule of law will therefore increase our security, and are essential to the long-term stability of free societies.**

Senator Feingold said that the cornerstone of our development strategy should be helping others achieve real self-governance anchored by rule of law. To do this, we must increase our civilian resource capabilities in order to bridge the gap between the abstract freedom agenda and tangible change. **He stressed that we cannot support democracy only selectively. When we promote human rights and rule of law, we align ourselves with the forces of moderation throughout the world. He noted we should encourage public participation in programs that strengthen institutions rooted in local communities.** He concluded by saying that diplomacy and civilian foreign assistance programs must be placed at the core of our development strategy.