

Democrats rally around Obama amid furore over Netanyahu Congress visit

Boehner's invitation sparked controversy despite White House growing more confident it can withstand efforts to frustrate its policy of nuclear talks with Iran



John Boehner faced a call from the Anti-Defamation League national director, Abraham Foxman, to rescind the invitation. Photograph: Joshua Roberts/Reuters

Dan Roberts and Amanda Holpuch in Washington

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The White House is growing more confident it can withstand efforts to frustrate its policy of nuclear talks with Iran, as a furore over the intervention of the Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, appears to be encouraging wavering Democrats to rally around their president.

In the first White House press conference since the Republican House speaker, John Boehner, sparked controversy by inviting Netanyahu to speak before a joint session of Congress amid calls for a tougher approach to Iran, administration officials claimed there was support for their argument that planned legislation authorising new sanctions, if talks fail, would be counter-productive.

“I think there is plenty of indication that the ... at least some members of Congress have found this rather plausible line of argument pretty persuasive,” the White House spokesman, Josh Earnest, told reporters.

Netanyahu is scheduled to address Congress on 3 March. He will also attend the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (Aipac) conference in Washington scheduled for 1-3 March.

Tzipi Livni says Israeli prime minister leading country into 'diplomatic isolation'