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Jewish Leaders and Activists Convene in DC to Combat Antisemitism

By JLNJ Staff | May 19, 2022

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(Courtesy of Jewish Federation in the Heart of NJ and Jewish Federation of MetroWest) At a moment marked by unprecedented levels of antisemitism, leaders from across North America joined with hundreds of other advocates around the country in Washington, DC for the Jewish Federations of North America's Washington Conference to urge our nation's leaders to combat antisemitism and hate crimes and increase funding for Jewish communal security. The group also advocated for expedited resettlement of Ukrainian refugees in their advocacy meetings with dozens of members of Congress and the Senate.

"I still remember lobbying with my peers at the Washington Conference 30 years ago when I was just beginning my path of communal leadership. I saw then the impact that individuals can have when they make their voices heard on Capitol Hill and I am proud to return today in this leadership position to continue to advocate for issues that will affect the Jewish community and humanity at large," said Mark Wilf, chair of the Board of Trustees of Jewish Federations of North America, during the opening plenary.

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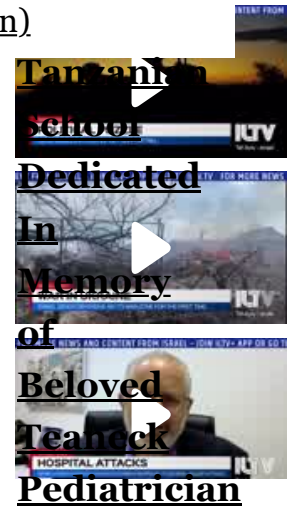


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Dov Ben-Shimon, CEO of Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ, said, “We’re here as a delegation to our national Jewish Federations Washington Conference,



advocating and lobbying for social services, increased funding for the nonprofit security grant funding, more resources for the No-Hate Act, further support for Ukrainian refugees, and more.” Ben-Shimon went on to say, “I’m so deeply proud of all the professional and lay volunteers who have made it to this day to come to lobby at our Congress to meet with our representatives, to talk with them and share with them the key issues of the moment.”

“The timing of the conference could not have been more relevant as antisemitic incidents are at record highs in New Jersey and the U.S.,” said Dan Rozett, Jewish Federation in the Heart of NJ’s manager of community relations and Israel engagement, who led



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the community's delegation. "The conference is a keystone in Jewish Federation's ongoing work with Jewish, multifaith and government partners to seek practical solutions in matters of importance to the Jewish and broader communities."



"Our delegation joined Jewish Federation members from 35 states, people of all backgrounds but united in our common struggle for justice, not just for our own but for all vulnerable populations in the United States," said Heart of NJ delegate Tony Kestler of Manalapan.

"The opportunity to inform our political representatives of the necessity for their support allowed us to actuate our civic duty and help direct national policy in a positive manner," said delegate Alan Brodman of Monroe.

"I felt it was time for me to learn how I could make an impact," delegate Amy Goodman of Morganville added.

During the two-day conference, members of Congress and other thought leaders and public officials addressed the participants.

Senate Majority leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) vowed to increase funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program. "Together we will continue to push for that \$360 million [in nonprofit security funding]. We all know how greatly this funding is needed, with antisemitism unfortunately on the rise."

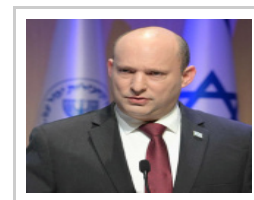
NFL star and advocate Zach Banner spoke about the unique bonds between the Jewish and Black communities in dealing with discrimination: "I think as an honorary 'mensch' and Black ally, the conversation today has to be about similarities and differences between the Jewish and Black community."

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Sen. Bill Hagerty (R-TN) said, “The Federation has done remarkable work to advance national security and root out and combat antisemitism at home and around the globe. I am grateful for the work you are doing.”

Ukrainian Ambassador Oksana Makarova spoke about the implications of the war in her country. “This is a fight about democracy against autocracy.”

Delegate Dara Winston of East Brunswick, who also works as a synagogue director, informed lawmakers of the importance of nonprofit security grants for houses of worship and their extended communities.

Susan Antman, Jewish Federation in the Heart of NJ’s executive director thanked delegates for raising their voices in support of issues that enable Jewish communities to be healthy, safe and caring.

Jewish Federations of North America President and CEO Eric Fingerhut, who served in Ohio’s House of Representatives, closed out the conference by encouraging the audience to raise their voices in support of issues that matter to the Jewish community.

“Collectively together, we can partner with the representatives of government to build the flourishing Jewish communities that the federations are working on in every single community—communities that are healthy, communities that are safe, communities that are caring.”

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