

Community Relations Committee of Greater MetroWest NJ

Year in Review

November 1, 2019 - October 31, 2020

Community Relations Committee

A NOTE ABOUT CRC'S ROLE

The CRC's mission is to mobilize the Jewish community on national, state and local issues to ensure that our interests are addressed

Through our government affairs division we lobby our elected representatives for federal and state dollars to help support the elderly, the medically infirm, Holocaust survivors, people with disabilities and those dealing with food insecurity. We also lobby for a strong US-Israel relationship and to protect our community against rising antisemitism.

By forging relationships with our elected representatives and building coalitions with other civic and ethnic-based groups, we make sure our voice is heard on issues which are central to our values and Jews and Americans.

Community Relations Committee

The Four Pillars of Community Relations Committee:

Legislative Affairs and Government Relations

The CRC advocates, both independently and through the State Association, for domestic agenda items, and internationally for Israel.

Intergroup Relations

The CRC builds and maintains strong relationships with members of other faith and ethnic communities, and creates shared events and important dialogues that lead to mutual understanding.

Israel and International Affairs

The CRC educates and engages high school and college students, as well as the wider community, to maintain a strong connection to the land of Israel.

Social Justice

The CRC works on issues to promote a just, fair and democratic society. Guided by Jewish values, the CRC educates, advocates and mobilizes action on issues important to the Jewish community.

Community Relations Committee

Pillar 1: Legislative Affairs and Government Relations

How does CRC advocate, both independently and through the Jewish Federation of NJ (JFNJ), for domestic agenda items, and internationally for Israel?

17 meetings with Federal and State elected officials
to advocate for **12** Greater MetroWest issues.



10 of the issues moved forward because of the help of CRC's advocacy.

Issues that CRC moved forward:

Due to: rise of anti-Semitism

CRC:



spoke with our New Jersey Congressional delegation about the disturbing rise of hate and anti-Semitism.

Led to:

- ★ A Non Profit Security Grant that increased program funding from **90** million to **180** million.
- ★ **The Never Again (Holocaust) Education Act**, that authorizes funding for Holocaust education through US Holocaust Museum, was **passed**.
- ★ **Anti-Boycott Divestment Sanction** bill being **passed**.

Community Relations Committee

Pillar 1: Legislative Affairs and Government Relations

From the start of COVID-19, before any stimulus packages were passed by Congress, **CRC convened NJ Federations and Partner Agencies** to virtually **lobby elected officials** for the crisis needs of non-profit organizations.

Due to: non-profits' need for additional funding due to COVID-19. Partner Agencies' need funding:

- to help stay in business
- to feed the hungry
- to assist elderly with groceries
- for paycheck protection
- for telehealth funding and more
- to support families with disabled children

CRC:



met with members of congress, other federations and our partner agencies in order to tell their stories on how COVID-19 has effected their business and the people they support.

Led to: CARES Act and Stimulus package to include:

- ★ **\$2 trillion** to help individuals and business who are struggling
- ★ **\$350 billion** in new Paycheck Protection
- ★ **program loans** available to non-profit organizations
- ★ **telehealth** funding
- ★ an **additional \$450 million** for food banks

Community Relations Committee

Pillar 1: Legislative Affairs and Government Relations

Due to: the need of older adults services like meals, job training, senior centers, health promotion, benefits enrollment, caregiver support, transportation, and more

CRC:



lobbied for legislation to reauthorize the Older Americans Act funds critical services that keep older adults healthy and independent during the Washington Mission*.

Led to: ★ Congress reauthorized the **Older Americans Act**.

Issues that CRC helped move forward:

Due to: the need to build mutual trust between Israelis and Palestinians, and spur economic development between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza

CRC:



lobbied for economic investments and relationships to create business ties between Israel and Palestinians during the Washington mission*.

Led to: ★ Congress passing the **Middle East Partnership for Peace Act** in June 2019.

*The Washington Missions were led by CRC and joined by other Federations and JFNA.

Community Relations Committee

Pillar 1: Legislative Affairs and Government Relations

CRC also met with government officials and legislators

During the Washington Mission:

CRC met with:

Elan Carr, Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combatting **Anti-Semitism**, State Department.

and

Ted Deutch, Florida Congressman and member of the bi-partisan Task Force for Combatting **Anti-Semitism**.

Received: a deeper **understanding of global anti-Semitism** and what's being done in Washington to combat it.

CRC works with Partner Agencies

- Worked in collaboration with CARES and ABLE to **strengthen advocacy** efforts on behalf of individuals with **disabilities and older adults**.
- Worked in collaboration with JEC for funding for the **Kosher Food Distribution** program at Bruriah High School in Elizabeth.
- Worked in collaboration with the Day Schools for an **increase in nonpublic school funding** for:
 - School Nursing: received an increase of \$97 to \$102 per pupil
 - Textbook Aid Program: received \$12,602,000
- Due to the increasing cost and complicated logistics of transportation needs of our partner Day Schools, Federation **created a Greater MetroWest Transportation Task force** that
 - created an opportunity for the schools to collaborate and compare notes.
 - focuses on advocacy.
 - explores Day School Initiatives-funded solutions to the rising costs.

Community Relations Committee

Pillar 1: Legislative Affairs and Government Relations

How does CRC encourage our community to engage in civic life and exercise the time honoured tradition of voting?

Candidate Forums:

(240 attended)



District 7 & District 11: Congressional Candidate Forum with:

Rep. Miki Sherrill & Rep. Rosemary Becchi
Senator Tom Kean, Jr Senator Tom Malinowski

Senatorial Candidate Forum

Senator Cory Booker and Rik Mehta



Due to the Candidate Forums*:

- ★ **28%** of the participants changed their decision:
 - on who to vote for
 - from undecided to decided
 - to vote

"Thank you for hosting I had a very different opinion of candidates after hearing them speak."- participant

"Voting by Mail in the NJ Primary" forum:

step by step instruction on how to complete your ballot

- ★ **76** individuals participated

"Get out the Vote" Video:

with local talent: students, Rabbis and leaders in our community

Our candidate forums, VBM webinars and get out the vote (GOTV) video help to educate voters on the issues, the candidates and the new process of voting through mail ballot.

Community Relations Committe

Pillar 2: Intergroup Relations

How does CRC build and maintain strong relationships with members of the interfaith community?



CRC facilitates a **monthly "Interfaith Women's Conversation"** group with **50** Jewish, Catholic, Christian and Muslim participants.*

* average of 12 participants per meeting

Because of of the Interfaith Women's Coverstation**:

74% of the participants **changed their understanding** of other faiths and their practices or beliefs.

"I've developed a greater understanding of different faiths, developed new relationships with women outside my own community and a sense that regardless of how we pray, or the beliefs and traditions that define us, we're all women with similar hopes, dreams and concerns."-participant

53% **developed relationships** with women of other faiths.

"I have increased optimism that there can be positive interactions between religious groups in our communities, and that we can set and reach productive goals."-participant

however

53% **attended only 1-3 conversations.**

Community Relations Committee

Pillar 3: Israel and International Affairs

How does CRC educate and engage high school and colleges students, as well as the wider community to maintain a strong connection to the land of Israel?

CRC organized various high school/college programs:

- ★ Israel Leadership, Education and Advocacy Day
- ★ Israel Engagement Fellowship
- ★ AIPAC Policy Conference (parent/teen cohort)
- ★ Write On For Israel

Israel Leadership, Education, and Advocacy Day (#ILEAD):

a seminar for high school students to **empower** themselves to become **pro-Israel** supporters on college campuses.

Supported by Cooperman Foundation



Because of #ILEAD: 85 participants

82% of the participants **would stand up for Israel.**

52% of the participants would consider being **part of a lobbying group** to advance Israel and the US-Israel relationship.

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Pillar 3: Israel and International Affairs

CRC organized various high school/college programs:

Israel Engagement Fellowship (IEF) Program:

a leadership program for 11th and 12th graders that **explores the centrality of Israel** in Jewish history and the diversity of Israel today.

Supported by Evan & Susan Ratner and Cooperman Foundation



Because of IEF: 20 participants

96%

of the participants became **familiar with the Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions (BDS)** movement on college campuses.

25% were familiar prior to this IEF program.

"I learned about BDS and ways to confront anti-Israel protests."-participant

84%

of the participants are **knowledgeable** about **Israel current events**.

16% were knowledgeable prior to this IEF program.

"I want to stand up for Israel!"-participant

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Pillar 3: Israel and International Affairs

CRC organized various high school/college programs:

AIPAC Conference (teens and parents cohort):

a Greater MetroWest delegation teens and their parents participate in a **three-day trip to Washington, DC**, for the largest gathering of the **pro-Israel movement** in the U.S.

Supported by Herb & Milly Iris Family Foundation



Because of AIPAC Conference: 15 parents and teens participated

100%

of the participants are **more aware of anti-Semitism/anti-Israel** activity on college campuses.

50%

of the participants are **prepared to be an effective advocate for Israel** and the US-Israel relationship on college campuses.

25%

of the participants consider taking a **leadership role on campus** to advocate for Israel and the Jewish people.

75% chose "not sure" if they would advocate - no one chose "no".

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Pillar 3: Israel and International Affairs

CRC organized various high school/college programs:

Write On For Israel Teen Program (WOFI)

two-year program to train a select group of high school juniors to **become advocates for Israel** through journalism, broadcasting, and public speaking. The program is a project of The Jewish Week of New York with the **aim of educating and empowering students to become informed about world issues** affecting Israel and eventually becoming college campus leaders.

Supported by Cooperman Foundation, Charles and Barbara Hirsh and Jay Mayesh



5 high school students participated

"Thank you for giving me the opportunity these last two years to learn and grow into a better Jewish leader."-participant

"Write On For Israel was an excellent growing experience for him, and we are so appreciative for the program. It really changed the person he is."-parent of a participant

Note: program sponsored by the Jewish Week Media Group and the CRC of the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest. Greater MetroWest subsidizes five students in each class, both 11th and 12th graders.

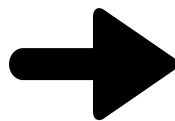
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Pillar 4: Social Justice

How does CRC help advance social justice and combat racial inequality?

In reaction to racial unrest in the wake of George Floyd's death:

CRC offered



**a 3 part series on Racism
in America**
(over 400 participants)

83%

of the participants have a **better understanding** of the effects of **systemic racism** in our community.

"It was tremendous including people with different functional backgrounds (education, health care, justice & community / faith based). Hearing the consistent themes of systemic racism with different examples further amplified the extent of systemic racism."
-participant

Because of CRC's Racism in America Series:

CRC created an anti-racism task force consisting of professionals across departments, Rabbi's and lay leaders (task force still being formed).

The goal of the task force is to:

- become allies to the black community
- advance racial equality
- educate our community in the existence of systemic racism
- join other coalitions in advocating issues on criminal justice reform



Community Relations Committee

Pillar 4: Social Justice

In reaction to racial unrest in the wake of George Floyd's death:

CRC organized → **3 meetings with American Black Leaders and Clergy**

Because of these meetings we became aware that:

- racism is systemic in many areas of the society.
- Newark has many organizations that we can partner with to make a difference.
- and
- how to engage with these multiple community partners to make a difference.

CRC also created awareness:



- ★ **CRC Website**
- ★ **"Public Square" bi-monthly Newsletter**
- ★ **2 blogs by Linda Scherzer, CRC Director**

Community Relations Committee

Pillar 4: Social Justice

How does CRC deepen the relationship between our Jewish community and other civic and ethnic groups?

CRC Partnered with the:

- **NAACP** of New Jersey on the "Vote by Mail" webinar in advance of the General Election
- **American Jewish Committee** on the Candidate Forums
- **Jewish Labor Committee** "Vote by Mail" event in advance of the Primary Election.
- **Jewish Labor Committee** on the Annual Labor Seder with (due to COVID-19 it was not held this year).
- **JFNA** on all government lobbying.

CRC supported the following Partner Agencies in our advocacy efforts:

Daughters of Israel

Friendship Circle

Golda Och Academy

Gottesman RTW Academy

JCC of Central NJ

JCC MetroWest

JESPY House

Jewish Community Housing Corporation

Jewish Educational Center (JEC)

Jewish Family Service of Central NJ

Jewish Family Service of MetroWest

Jewish Services for the Developmentally Disabled (JSDD)

Jewish Vocational Service

Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy

YM/YWHA of Union County