

From the desk of...

Mark Wilf

JFNA's D.C. Office Takes the Lead on Holocaust Issues

JFNA's Washington, D.C. office has worked tirelessly for decades to advocate on behalf of Holocaust survivors. Approximately 80,000 survivors live in the United States—yet, one-third live at or beneath the poverty line. All survivors face the daily hardship of aging while also carrying a history of trauma. Those facing financial hardship lack the resources to get the help they need.

Over the past few years, the JFNA has been fortunate enough to receive the support of many within the federal government and Congress who wish to ensure that the world has learned the lessons of the Holocaust. This is especially crucial at a time when anti-Semitism is on the rise. As members of Congress prepared to leave Washington for their August recess, the JFNA was thrilled to play an integral role in the introduction of two new pieces of legislation: one to support Holocaust survivors generally and the other to raise awareness of the atrocities of the Holocaust in schools.

Sponsored by Senators Cardin (D-MD), Cramer (R-ND), and Rosen (D-NV) and Representatives Wasserman Schultz (D-FL), Stefanik (R-NY), and Shalala (D-FL), the Trauma-Informed Care for Modernization of Eldercare (TIME) for Holocaust Survivors Act prioritizes the needs of survivors within the Older Americans Act; creates a governmental portfolio that focuses on Holocaust survivors; establishes a national resource center in which to share the best practices and promote person-centered, trauma-informed care for agencies that serve older adults experiencing the long-term and adverse consequences of trauma; and ensures that providers of nutrition and transportation services can meet the special health, mobility, and dietary needs (e.g., Kashrut) of survivors and others.

Given the current, unusually tight federal budget and entrenched culture of partisanship, it is no small order to secure overwhelming bipartisan support. JFNA's Public Policy Associate Vice President Stephan Kline has

been closely advising elected officials, identifying legislators who can introduce bills in both houses of Congress, proposing legislative language within drafts, and securing the support of 300 national and local Jewish organizations, agencies, and synagogue supporters across all 50 states in only a few days.

Over the past few weeks, our Washington office has also been leading the effort for Congress to introduce the Never Again (Holocaust) Education Act in partnership with Hadassah. The bipartisan quartet of senators, including Senators Rosen (D-NV), Cramer (R-ND), Rubio (R-FL), and Blumenthal (D-CT), introduced this legislation, which enables the use of public and private funds to help educators effectively teach about the Holocaust and combat the rise of anti-Semitism.

These developments not only raise the profile of a significant issue for the Jewish community within the halls of Congress but also set the stage for local federations and coalition partners to engage in advocacy in the coming weeks and months. Please stay tuned for advocacy messages and to ensure your voice is heard in Congress.

For additional information, or to assist with our Washington office's advocacy efforts, please contact Stephan Kline at (202) 736-5864.

Mark Wilf is Chair of the Board of Trustees.



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