

Political Roundup

Gillibrand Nominates Rabbi Schneier For Presidential Medal

U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand announced the nomination of Rabbi Arthur Schneier for the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award. In a letter to the president, Gillibrand celebrated Rabbi Schneier's decades-long fight for human rights around the world. The letter was also signed by Senators Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Robert Casey (D-PA).

Dear Mr. President,

We write to ask you to consider bestowing the Presidential Medal of Freedom upon Rabbi Arthur Schneier. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, which Rabbi Schneier founded in 1965 in response to the plight of Soviet Jews. This year also marks the 70th anniversary of Rabbi Schneier's own liberation from the Nazi regime.

Rabbi Schneier has worked for 50 years on behalf of human rights around the world. Through the Appeal of Conscience Foundation he has worked to advance the causes of religious freedom, tolerance, peace, and democracy and in light of current events, it is now more important than ever to recognize those who oppose all forms of extremism and hatred.

In 1981, Rabbi Schneier led the first interfaith mission to China, and in 1988 was appointed by President Bill Clinton to serve as one of the three American religious leaders to conduct the first dialogue on religious freedom with then Chinese President Jiang Zemin. Rabbi Schneier was also instrumental in restoring Jewish culture to the Soviet Union.

As a Holocaust survivor, Rabbi Schneier knows very well the horrors of genocide and "ethnic cleansing," and took the initiative to work to save Muslims in the Balkans years before the atrocities committed there.

Honoring Rabbi Schneier with the Presidential Medal of Freedom would highlight Rabbi Schneier's work on behalf of freedom, tolerance, and universal human rights. We ask that you please consider him for this highest honor. ❖

Rice Meets Netanyahu To Discuss Counterterrorism

U.S. Representative Kathleen Rice traveled to Israel this week as a member of a bipartisan Congressional delegation led by U.S. Representative Mike McCaul (R-TX), chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security. In Jerusalem, the delegation met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Ayalon, Israeli Minister of Defense Moshe Ya'alon, U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro, and other Israeli officials. In a meeting on Tuesday, the delegation spoke with Prime Minister Netanyahu about Israeli counterterrorism efforts and the importance of the relationship between the United States and Israel.

"The support and the alliance with the United States is a foundation of our

national security," Prime Minister Netanyahu said during the meeting. "It's a bipartisan position. It's also bipartisan here. I think there's complete unanimity about the importance of the relationship with the United States."

"Israel is our closest ally in the region, and every dollar we invest in Israel's security is a direct investment in American homeland security," said Rep. Rice. "No matter how partisan the atmosphere in Washington has been or may become, we have a responsibility to ensure that support for Israel always remains a bipartisan priority. We made it clear to Prime Minister Netanyahu that we take that responsibility very seriously and we're eager to continue working with him to enhance the security of both our countries and protect the people we serve."



Rep. Kathleen Rice with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

The delegation is traveling to countries in the Middle East and Europe to examine evolving security threats to the U.S. homeland, including the flow of foreign fighters from Western countries to Syria and Iraq and recent terrorist plots and attacks against the United States and European allies. The critical focus will be the U.S. government's efforts, working with our allies, to identify known or suspected terrorists and foreign fighters who pose a threat to the homeland and to prevent them from traveling to the United States. The delegation will assess European counterterrorism programs, best practices to counter violent extremism, and the U.S.-Coalition strategy to eliminate the terrorist sanctuary in Syria and Iraq. The delegation will also focus on the Israeli perspective, including border security and threats emanating throughout the region near its borders.

In addition to Rep. Rice and Chairman McCaul, the delegation includes Reps. Pete Sessions (R-TX), Vern Buchanan (R-FL), Bill Keating (D-MA), John Katko (R-NY), Will Hurd (R-TX), and Barry Loudermilk (R-GA). ❖

Greenfield Hosts Another Successful Event To Prevent Lien Sales

New York City Council Member David G. Greenfield, in partnership with the New York City Department of Finance, Department of Environmental Protection, and Department of Housing Preservation and Development, hosted another successful lien sale event on Wednesday. At the event, a total of 82 property owners settled outstanding balances with municipal services. This event, which Councilman Greenfield has hosted every year since he was



elected in 2010, gives property owners a direct way to resolve their outstanding debts before their properties are sold.

"I am very grateful to all the government agencies that came out to my office to help my constituents. Having the threat of a lien sale is very stressful for any homeowner. I am really pleased that we were able to help so many homeowners. If you think you have a lien that is about to be filed on your property, please call my office for assistance immediately at 718-853-2704," said Councilman Greenfield.

When a person does not pay his or her property taxes, water charges, and other charges against his or her property, these charges manifest into tax liens that may be sold in a tax-lien sale. If the liens are left unpaid, they may begin to collect interest and may even lead to eventual foreclosure. The last day to pay debt or enter into a payment agreement to prevent a lien sale is May 14, 2015. ❖

Jewish American Heritage Celebration In Washington, May 20

By Bracha Fink

Every May, the United States Congress continues its decades-long tradition of officially recognizing Jewish American Heritage. In recent years, an event recognizing several outstanding Jewish Americans has been held on Capitol Hill. This year will be no different, and on May 20, the United States Congress will celebrate Jewish American Heritage Month 2015 by honoring Jewish Americans who have greatly enriched the fabric of American life. Each year, Congress honors individuals who represent different historical milestones, whose personas are reflective of the current legislative agenda, and whose contributions can help Congress understand how their respective missions apply to their service in Congress.

As the world marks the 70th anniversary of the end of the Holocaust, Judith Kallman, a child survivor, will be recognized for her devotion to telling her story through her book *A Candle in the Heart* in the hope that speaking out "makes the world a better place and stops the hatred we all have for the strangers or different people in our midst." This year's milestone anniversary of the end of the Holocaust makes honoring its survivors and their remarkable stories more important than ever, especially in the face of rising anti-Semitism and intolerance.

Millions of Americans were riveted by the images of President Obama and former President Bush joining together as the nation commemorated the 50th anniversary of the "Bloody Sunday" Selma March across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, a major turning point in the civil-rights movement, in which countless Jews were involved. Mark Meyer Appel will be recognized for his continued devotion to advancing civil rights for all Americans and promoting inter-cultural understanding. As the founder of the Bridge Multicultural and Advocacy Project, a unity center that aims to address issues across cultural lines, he is a leader in promoting tolerance among people of all backgrounds.

At a time when the country and Congress are grappling with immigration policy, Chief Rabbi Itzhak Yehoshua, president of the Bukharian Rabbinical Council of America, offers an inspiring immigrant success story. Rabbi Yehoshua immigrated to the United States in 1987, and successfully built the American Bukharian community from what was once a small group into a vast community with over 65,000 members. Under Rabbi Yehoshua's leadership, the Bukharian community demonstrated how immigrants integrate into American life while preserving their unique culture and traditions, exemplifying the American Dream.

As many Americans are reconnecting to their heritage, Aish International, the largest Jewish outreach organization of its kind in the world, links countless Jewish Americans to their past in a warm, non-judgmental environment, demonstrating that in the United States, people are free to connect to their cultural and religious heritage while simultaneously contributing to the fabric of American life. Founded in 1974, Aish International has impacted millions worldwide, with branches now operating in six continents and over 150,000 people attending its programs each year.

"Having the United States Congress celebrate Jewish American Heritage Month is a testament to the uniqueness and greatness of the United States of America, which has allowed Jewish Americans to stay true to their faith and to be participants and contributors in all aspects of American life," said Ezra Friedlander, CEO of The Friedlander Group, coordinator of the annual event, and Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, Executive Vice President of the NY Board of Rabbis, emcee of the Congressional Program. ❖