

Agudath Israel's Pre-Election Legislative Breakfast

By Shoshana Bernstein

Less than 24 hours before Election Day polling booths opened, some 200 community leaders, activists and government officials gathered under the banner of Agudath Israel of America for the organization's Fourth Annual Legislative Breakfast.

Last week's highly anticipated event brought relevant issues, political hopefuls, and community activism to the forefront, showcasing Agudath Israel's vital involvement in myriad aspects of Jewish communal life. The overflow crowd included a veritable who's who of influential Jewish businessmen and professional activists who joined together with elected officials at the elite Down Town Association, to focus on some of the critical issues of the day.

Litigation attorney Joseph Zelmanovitz of Stahl and Zelmanovitz served as the chairman of the event. He introduced Agudath Israel's executive vice president Rabbi David Zwiebel. The Agudath Israel leader described the dual mission of the timely event as "to see and be seen. We're here, we care, we're watching."

Breakfast co-chairman Joseph Stamm, president and CEO of MedReview Inc., then introduced Congress-

man Jerrold Nadler. Representative Nadler set the stage for the focus of the breakfast in his remarks regarding Israel and the nuclear threat it faces from Iran.

The arrival and introduction of Senator Charles Schumer created a noticeable stir. Shlomo Werdiger, chairman of the board of trustees of Agudath Israel, cited the senator's legendary involvement and dedication on behalf of Jewish affairs, calling him a "true friend of Israel and Agudath Israel." Senator Schumer underscored the threat from Iran, stating emphatically, "We cannot ease up on sanctions. We must remain strong, vigilant and outspoken."

The emotional highlight of the morning came when Radni Davoodi, co-founder of The Atlantis Organization, took to the podium. He shared his moving personal story of having been drafted to the front lines of the Iranian army when he was just eight years old and his family's subsequent escape to the United States, where "the American dream is a reality." Davoodi then introduced Benjamin Lawsky who, as New York state superintendent of financial

services, has been instrumental in enforcing the economic sanctions imposed on Iran. Lawsky described the many steps taken to curtail terrorist funding and the need for ongoing sanctions, stating that "money is the oxygen feeding the fire that is terrorism."

Ben Weinstock, a partner in Ruskin Moscou Faltischek, P.C., who attended alongside RMF partner Irv Brun and others, then spoke about the importance of religious liberty in the United States as a prelude to the introduction of New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman. His remarks were followed by Avi Schick's glowing personal introduction of the attorney general.

Picking up on the theme of religious freedom, Schneiderman described the expansion of Orthodox religious communities throughout New York State, and the resulting need for public education regarding religious practices. The attorney general urged everyone in attendance to remain vigilant, declaring, "We cannot take our religious freedom for granted." Schneiderman concluded his remarks promising, "As your attorney general, I work every day to live up to the mandate of *tzedek* and *mishpat*, righteousness and judgment."

The final address of the morning was given by the former CIA director James Woolsey. In his humorous yet sobering remarks, Woolsey focused on the power of the oil cartel as the most serious threat to long-term global security. The need to find alternative sources of energy must assume the highest level of priority, he asserted.

Other dignitaries who participated in the breakfast were NYC Comptroller John Liu, Assemblymen Rory Lancman and David Weprin, former Assembly Ways and Means Chairman Jerry Kremer, City Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Vivorito and Aron B. Wieder of the Rockland County legislature as well as David Lobl, representing Governor Andrew Cuomo and Simcha Eichenstein representing State Comptroller Thomas Dinapoli.

The event, which was organized by the Friedlander Group and sponsored by Ruskin Moscou Faltischek, The Atlantis Organization, MedReview, Stahl and Zelmanovitz, Pomegranate, and Flushing Bank, concluded with Chaskel Bennett, member of the board of trustees of Agudath Israel, exhorting everyone to return to their communities and get out the vote on Election Day.



(L-R) Radni Davoodi, Superintendent Benjamin Lawsky, Rabbi Chaim Dovid Zwiebel, Joseph Stamm, former CIA director James Woolsey, Chaskel Bennett, Joseph Zelmanovitz, Benjamin Weinstock, Rabbi Yehiel Kalish, Ezra Friedlander and Leon Goldenberg

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