

## Agudath Israel Legislative Luncheon: 'We Must Stand Together Against Anti-Semitism'

JUDITH DINOWITZ

Just weeks after a turbulent and divisive election, on Tuesday, November 29, an avid audience of Jewish community activists and legislators attended Agudath Israel's annual legislative gathering.

Held at Alliance Bernstein Global Wealth Management in Midtown Manhattan, the luncheon featured federal law enforcement and NYC government officials, as well as a bi-partisan panel of congressmen moderated by Rabbi Abba Cohen, director of Agudath Israel's Washington Office.

The theme of the luncheon, "National Security Decisions Awaiting President Trump in His First 100 Days: The View from Congress," led to a discussion of many vital topics, such as anti-Semitism, immigration, and supporting Israel. Throughout the afternoon, speakers kept coming back to the idea that cooperation and partnership — our ability to work together and present a united front — are our best weapons against anti-Semitism and the evolving terrorist threat.

As NYC Public Advocate Letitia James declared, "In the face of hatred and adversity, the strongest weapon we have is to stand together." She stated that there is an economic anxiety in the city, and, since the election, a growing proliferation of hatred against the Jewish state. Recently, she attended a protest after a playground was defaced with swastikas. She declared that New York will take action to protect all New Yorkers against hatred and bigotry.

NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer, corroborating the Public Advocate's words, said that since the election, hate crimes in the U.S. have risen by 31%. "We must address these issues," he said. He also warned of the possibility, based on certain campaign promises made by President-elect Trump and a Republican Congress, of a tremendous NYC budget cut, one that would result in more homelessness and crime.

Acting Brooklyn District Attorney Eric



Mr. William F. Sweeney, Jr., FBI New York Director-in-Charge.



Acting Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez.



L-R: Rabbi Abba Cohen, Mr. Ezra Friedlander, U.S. Rep. Randy Weber, U.S. Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, U.S. Rep. Paul Gosar, U.S. Rep. Eliot Engel, Rabbi Chaim Dovid Zwiebel, Mr. Sol Werdiger, and Mr. William F. Sweeney, Jr.

Gonzalez then spoke. He said, "I am here to commit myself to the community — a place of fairness, of safety and security." He acknowledged and thanked the legislators present.

Rabbi Abe Friedman, a prominent law enforcement chaplain, introduced William F. Sweeney, Jr., FBI New York Director-in-Charge, who agreed that partnerships are the key to fighting terrorism — a threat that has evolved, with younger attackers and homegrown assailants with no obvious connection to terrorist regimes or

agencies. "The FBI does nothing alone," he said. "Everything we do is based on partnerships. Thank you, especially this group, for your community and your voice."

Finally, attendees enjoyed a lively panel discussion moderated by Rabbi Cohen, with representatives Eliot Engel (D-NY), Paul Gosar (R-AZ), Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY), and Randy Weber (R-TX). All of the panelists avowed their support for Israel and their desire to see U.S. support for Israel grow.

Discourse included the Memorandum

of Understanding between Israel and the U.S., additional support for Iron Dome batteries, and the need to keep a strong relationship with our traditional allies in NATO. Several panelists spoke of the need to limit Iran's power. All participants agreed that we need a sane and wise immigration policy — one that does not shut the doors, but vets immigration with common sense.

In his opening remarks, Rabbi Chaim Dovid Zwiebel, Agudath Israel's executive vice president, thanked the event's sponsors, coordinator, and attending elected officials.

Sharestates was the corporate sponsor of the luncheon; other sponsors included Mr. Joseph Richter, Mr. David Matovich, Mr. Simon Gans and Mr. Zurich Gabof.

The event was coordinated by The Friedlander Group and its CEO, Mr. Ezra Friedlander. Elected officials included New York State Assembly Members Helene Weinstein and David Weprin; New York City Council Member Rory Lancman; Rockland County legislator, Aaron Wieder; and Mayor Izzy Spitzer of New Square.

Brief introductions to the speakers were made by: Mr. Jeffrey Wiesenfeld, principal with Alliance Bernstein Global Wealth Management and host of the luncheon; Mr. Joseph B. Stamm, luncheon co-chair and CEO of MedReview; Mr. Michael A. Ramin, luncheon co-chair; prominent community activist and luncheon co-chair, Mr. Peter Rebenwurz; and Rabbi Abe Friedman.

Several attendees appreciated the chance to network and to hear directly from legislators about the situation in New York and Washington. One participant had come all the way from Lakewood on behalf of her school. Another, a member of a Jewish Community Council, said, "I was impressed by the issues that were discussed — immigration, anti-Semitism, Israel — and the bi-partisan nature of the panel. It was great to see members of many Jewish communities throughout New York come together in an event like this."

## Orthodox Jewish Chamber of Commerce Schedules Israel Mission

SHIMMY BLUM

A group of elite business and political activists will head to Israel during early January 2017 for a trailblazing mission to strengthen economic ties between the U.S. and Israel business world.

The "U.S.-Israel Business Alliance Mission," to be held on January 3 and 4, is a project of the Orthodox Jewish Chamber of Commerce (OJC) and its Executive Public Policy Committee, led by Dr. Joe Frager, Dr. Paul Brody, Mrs. Odelya Jacobs and Mr. Duvi Honig.

This mission is unique in that it's founded upon grassroots Orthodox community businesses in both countries, rather than the political or lobbying spheres. These businesspeople and activists have a genuine interest in the success of community business in the

U.S. and Israel, and stand to benefit from invaluable networking and relationship-building during the mission.

The OJC and mission leaders are already revered within the highest echelons of the business and political spheres both in the U.S. and Israel, and they will be utilizing their experience and relationships to the benefit of businesses and entrepreneurs in both countries. Other VIP activists, business leaders and government officials will join in the mission and help make it a success.

During the mission, there will be a special Knesset symposium attended by leading Israeli government officials, cabinet members and business leaders; a private meeting with President Reuven Rivlin; and a VIP dinner at the King David Hotel with leading govern-

ment officials, diplomats and business leaders, among other events.

At these and other forums, various measures to strengthen economic ties, defeat BDS and counter anti-Semitism will be discussed. "There are so many initiatives out there that can help meet our countries' economic goals, but they require the proper relationships and willpower to implement," explains Mr. Honig. "At this mission, the OJC will once again prove how much more powerful and effective we are when we work together."

Additional details about the mission schedule and participants will be released in the weeks ahead. For more information, or to participate or support our mission, please call 212-659-5270 or email events@OjChamber.com.