

Political Roundup



Jewish Leaders Gather On Capitol Hill On First Day Of 115th Congress

By Julie Ahn

Influential Jewish activists gathered on Capitol Hill on the opening day of the 115th Congress in Washington, DC, where members of the House and Senate were sworn in. Among these leaders were Leon Goldenberg, Agudath Israel

enbergh describes: “It depends on which side of the aisle you’re on. The Republicans are really in a phenomenal mood, but they are talking about working with the other side. Democrats recognize the political landscape and are determined to make their voices heard.”

Ezra Friedlander poignantly added: “We are in Washington today because it is very important that the commu-



Ezra Friedlander, Leon Goldenberg, U.S. Senate Democratic Leader Charles Schumer, and Chaskel Bennett



U.S. Senator Ted Cruz, Ezra Friedlander, Chaskel Bennett, and Leon Goldenberg

trustee and chairman of Shalom Torah Academy of NJ; Chaskel Bennett, Agudath Israel of America trustee; and Ezra Friedlander, CEO of The Friedlander Group.

“Today is an important day to be on the Hill,” remarked Chaskel Bennett, “the moment freshman members realize their dreams of becoming a Congress member, and reelected veterans get sworn back in. It is a day all members remember—hence the importance of being present.”

Regarding the mood on Capitol Hill in the face of a divided nation, Leon Gold-

nity introduces itself—the political professionals, the communal leaders—to both Democrats and Republicans. We’re very heartened because there is a sense of appreciation for the role of the community. We’ve been meeting with senators and congressional members from across the aisle. We are trying to reinforce a positive message.”

Friedlander went on to describe how he had met with Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA), reaffirming the importance of introducing new members of Con-

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gress to the community. “Kamala Harris, a new senator for California, has not met with many Jewish groups. I felt this was an important opportunity to introduce [ourselves]. That in and of itself is not going to carry the day, but it is an important step. A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. I felt it was important our presence be felt.”



Ezra Friedlander and U.S. Secretary of HUD nominee Dr. Ben Carson

The seasoned veterans had the opportunity to meet many members of Congress, celebrating the day with returning members and warmly welcoming new ones. The job of an activist, said Bennett, is to “constantly create and nurture relationships with congressional members and their staff, to advocate and advance the agenda and the interests of the Orthodox Jewish com-

munity. With so much happening in the world, it is vital for our community to have those relationships in Washington.” ❖

Kaminsky Named Ranking Member Of Environment Committee

New York State Senator Todd Kaminsky has been named the Ranking Member of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee by Democratic Conference Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins. Kaminsky was also assigned to several other key committees that will enable him to continue fighting for Long Island and the residents of the 9th Senate District.

“I am honored to serve as the Ranking Member of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee, and am excited to get to work to protect our natural resources—both here on Long Island’s South Shore as well as across our great state,” said Senator Kaminsky. “Here on Long Island, our beautiful land and pristine water resources are invaluable to our economy and our way of life. It is our duty to preserve them for future generations. We need to protect our air and water, keep our beaches and waterways clean and our local ecosystems thriving. We must also crack down on polluters, invest in green energy, and tackle climate change to mitigate the effects of future storms. I am thankful that Leader Stewart-Cousins has entrusted me with leading our conference’s efforts to preserve our environment, and look

forward to continuing to fight hard to protect our natural resources and Long Island’s beauty.”

Stewart-Cousins said, “Senator Todd Kaminsky is an outstanding public servant and I am proud that he will serve as Ranking Member on the important Environmental Conservation Committee. Senator Kaminsky has been a fierce advocate for protecting Long Island residents and our state’s natural resources. Todd understands the real impact of climate change and he will ensure we make smart infrastructure investments to protect our communities.”

Kaminsky is a staunch advocate for the environment, leading the successful fight against the proposed Port Ambrose LNG (liquefied natural gas) terminal off the coast of Long Island. Senator Kaminsky also fought hard to protect Long Island’s beaches, air, and water—especially the Island’s aquifer, which provides a clean and plentiful water supply to both Nassau and Suffolk counties. Additionally, Kaminsky pushed for state aid for the proposed Bay Park outfall pipe as well as other environmental projects in his district. Kaminsky also sponsored legislation to protect children from toxic chemicals in toys, address and mitigate the effects of climate change, and ban the sale of toxic cleaning agents, among other environmental-related legislation. Further, Senator Kaminsky has organized several community cleanups to beautify area parks and waterways.

Senator Kaminsky was also assigned to the Codes, Finance, Transportation, Health, and Alcoholism & Drug Abuse committees, as well as the Committee on Homeland Security & Military and Veterans Affairs, and is also a Ranking Member of the Local Government committee.

“I look forward to getting back to work this session to continue fighting for Long Island,” Senator Kaminsky said. “My new committee assignments will enable me to do just that, while cracking down on crime and corruption, cutting our taxes, standing up for our veterans and the environment, and getting our fair share of state aid for our schools and infrastructure.” ❖

Education Forum With Senator Kaminsky, February 7

Senator Kaminsky will be hosting Chancellor Betty Rosa, Regent Roger Tilles, and others for a forum on diploma options. The event is scheduled for South Side High School in Rockville Centre on February 7 at 7:00 p.m. ❖

Kaminsky Calls For More Friday LIRR Service

In response to requests from constituents racing to make it home in time for Shabbos, Senator Todd Kaminsky called on Long Island Rail Road president Patrick Nowakowski to better accommodate commuters in the Five Towns by adding an additional train to its Friday “sundown service” schedule on the Far Rockaway branch.

Destinations Brings Affordable Kosher Cruises And Tours

Destinations by Yossi Zablocki, a leader in kosher vacations and Pesach programs, has now entered the kosher cruise and land tour business and is already revolutionizing the concept of kosher cruises and tours. “For years, *glatt kosher* cruises were out of financial reach for so many kosher vacationers, and kosher land tours were not even marketed to the American Jewish

He has also partnered with other *glatt kosher* tour operators that combine land tours with cruises for a complete vacation experience. They have groups coming in from Israel and Europe taking a two-week land tour/cruise. They spend one week touring the Canadian Rockies and one week on an Alaskan cruise seeing the most magnificent glaciers on Earth. For U.S. clients, they have split up this package and



community,” says Zablocki. By partnering with Koshersea (an Israeli Kosher Cruise tour operator), Zablocki has set out to change that. “We are offering a 10-night Caribbean Cruise in February on the Costa Cruise line that is priced at the same rate as a 10-night hotel stay on land (only \$159 per person per night). Plus, you are at sea for Shabbos and don’t miss a single port! During the summer, they already have trips planned to the Norwegian Fjords, Italy, Greece, Spain, and Morocco,” Zablocki notes.

are allowing people to join the land tour, the cruise, or both! Also planned for the fall is a land tour/cruise of Brazil, Argentina, and South America, and next January is Australia and New Zealand. In Israel, the baby-boomer generation has jumped on these vacations and it’s time to offer them to their American counterparts.

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