



GOVERNMENT MATTERS

NJ STATE ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH FEDERATIONS

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ROY TANZMAN, ESQ.
PRESIDENT

JACOB TOPOREK, ESQ.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

CONSTITUENT
ORGANIZATIONS

JEWISH FEDERATION
OF ATLANTIC AND CAPE
MAY COUNTIES

JEWISH FEDERATION
OF CENTRAL NEW
JERSEY

JEWISH FEDERATION OF
GREATER CLIFTON-
PASSAIC

JEWISH FEDERATION OF
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UNITED JEWISH
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JEWISH FEDERATION OF
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UJA FEDERATION OF
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UNITED JEWISH
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BUCKS

JEWISH FEDERATION OF
SOMERSET, HUNTERDON
& WARREN COUNTIES

JEWISH FEDERATION OF
SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY

State Association Supports Federations' Efforts to Address Impact of Economy

The State Association has responded to the urging of the twelve constituent federations to take an active role in pursuing initiatives to address the affects that the downturn in the U.S. and New Jersey economy has had on the federations and their beneficiary agencies. "At a time when resources are shrinking and coordinated efforts can prove useful in finding a way through tough economic times, the State Association was pleased to provide assistance to our federation community," stated Roy Tanzman, State Association President.

Starting with the bringing together of federation executives and directors of Jewish Family Service agencies, the State Association has provided forums for discussion, exploration and information gathering. On November 26, 2009, the State Association held a meeting of federation and JFS administrators which provided a wonderful opportunity to share approaches, best practices, ideas and concerns. "I came away with a dozen helpful ways that might serve my community well in these bleak economic times," noted Forum participant Bob Seltzer, Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Atlantic And Cape May Counties.

Trenton Workshop--The State Association coordinated an Economic Impact Workshop in Trenton on February 19, 2009 at the Welcome Center, State House Annex. The Workshop brought together a number of representatives from various state departments to brief the Workshop participants on what resources are available on such matters as mortgage and housing assistance, food banks and hunger issues, energy lifelines, job training and unemployment help, senior services and, among other things, the "211" informational network.

Foreclosure Seminar--As an outgrowth of the Trenton Workshop two Foreclosure Training Programs were sponsored by the State Association in cooperation with the NJ Department of Banking and Insurance. NJ Citizen Action provided the instructional training. The north/central New Jersey training took place in Livingston supported by the efforts of Lori Price Abrams and Reuben Rotman of United Jewish Communities of NJ of MetroWest and JFS of MetroWest respectively.

NJ State Association of Jewish Federations

501 Green Lane, Suite 202

Union, NJ 07083

Phone: (908) 352-7930

Fax: (908) 352-5204

Email: admin@stateassn.org

Jen Weiss and Alan Respler led the way for the Cherry Hill Training, which was supported by The Jewish Federation of Southern NJ and Samost Family and Childrens' Service of Southern NJ. Each session had more that 40 participants and included Jewish community, governmental, private business and interfaith community based organizations.

Endowments--The State Association is leading coalition members in support of the quick enactment of current legislation governing endowment funds whose value fall below its historic starting date. Under current NJ law, monies from these endowments cannot be expended when the endowment value fall to that level. "Given the financial downturn in the economy, there is great concern, especially among non-profit organizations and educational institutions, that rely on income from endowments, as our federation does, to pay for needed services and programs as our normal funding sources shrink," related Gerrie Bamira, Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Middlesex County.

Beside the State Association, the coalition includes the NJ Hospital Association, Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, Princeton and Rutgers, the NJ Center for Non Profits, NJ PAC, NJ Law Revision Commission and the NJ Catholic Conference.

In March, 2009, Senator Dick Codey (Essex) introduced the Uniform Prudent Management of Institutional Funds Act (UPMIFA) (S2583), which addresses the concerns of the non-profits. In the Assembly, a similar bill (A3871) was sponsored by Assemblymen Patrick Diegnan (Middlesex) and John McKeon (Essex). The State Legislature voted to approve UPMIFA, moving the legislation to Governor Corzine's desk on May 21, 2009.

Jewish Day Schools--The State Association testified at Assembly Budget Committee hearings in support of restoration of almost \$7 million in technology support funding cuts in the Department of Education proposed 2010 fiscal year allocation.

The State Association invited Jewish day school principals and representatives to participate in a conversation to assess needs, share problems and discuss possible solutions regarding the affordability of Jewish education. Howard Gases, Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Monmouth County, as representative of the federations at the meeting, commented, "The federations are concerned as to the financial stressors on day schools, in particular the inability of parents to pay tuition during these difficult times. Many of the schools are our beneficiary agencies so it is important to find ways the federations and day schools can work together to alleviate the pressures brought about by the economic downturn." In furtherance of the cooperative effort, the State Association has served as a conduit for information relating to federal stimulus funding for Special Education Services for non-public schools.

Solomon Schechter and other religious schools were represented in person and by phone call-in. The State Association sponsored meeting included presentations as to joint pricing and purchasing, group health insurance and self insurance. Yeshiva University's Azrieli Graduate School Institute for University-School Partnership provided information on its expertise about school affordability and outreach to lay leaders and Jewish community education professionals through seminars and programs. YU offered to continue to assist in bringing the various Jewish education interests in NJ together.

Similar discussions were initiated by the State Association among members of the NJ Advisory Committee on Non-Public Schools. The Committee is a NJ Department of Education advisory body that includes representatives of private, Catholic, Protestant, Baptist, Muslim and other non-public schools. The Advisory Committee agreed to share approaches and coordinate policy initiatives directed at state government.

Child Care and Unemployment--The State Association was asked to investigate whether childcare and unemployment criteria in the state can be modified to meet an emergency need. The matter involved child care programs administered by Jewish community Centers and subsidized by state and county programs that allow both parents to work and have their children cared for by these community agencies. Once the family meets the criteria, they are subject the rules of the program. The troubling rule is the requirement that both spouses be employed. If one, or both, of the spouses loses their job, there is a one month grace period in which the spouse must be looking for another position of employment [NJAC 10:15-6.15(a)]. If no position is found in one month, family eligibility for the program is denied and they are forced to drop out of the program. Day care supervision becomes a full time job for the unemployed spouse, who cannot concentrate on the activities it takes to seek employment.

Since the one month grace period in this economy is a hardship and not reasonable or equitable, Senator Barbara Buono (Middlesex) was approached to intervene with State Department of Human Services Commissioner Jennifer Velez about amending NJAC 10:15-6.15(a) to allow for a more reasonable grace period. Commissioner Velez accommodated our concern by increasing the period allowed for parental job search from 30 days to 90 days effective April 1, 2009. "The new period is a step in the right direction for which the State Association can take pride in leading the way," said Stanley Stone, Executive Vice-President of the Jewish Federation of Central New Jersey.

Interfaith Anti-Hunger Initiative--Serving as a contributing participant and advisor, the State Association supported efforts initiated by the Jewish Federation of Greater Middlesex County to reach out to community residents seeking assistance in restocking food bank and pantry shelves for the Passover/Easter holiday. The Federation and the State Association partnered with the Diocese of Metuchen and its Catholic Charities agency. The initiative, which continues as the Middlesex County Coalition to Combat Poverty and Hunger, will be hosting a networking workshop on June 15, 2009 at Middlesex County College. Coalition partners are Jewish Family and Vocational Service of Middlesex County, local elected officials and freeholders, United Way of Central NJ, Middlesex County food programs, interfaith churches including the Muslim Society of Middlesex and the Anti-Hunger Coalition of NJ.

Vocational Services--The State Association has been involved in discussions with the Jewish Vocational Services of MetroWest, the sole stand alone JVS in our federation community, and with the directors of the various Jewish Family Service agencies attempting to providing a forum to produce a job bank service for all the federations.

Federal Programs--On the Federal level, the State Association, with congressional advocacy support of federation community relations committees and professionals, has supported initiatives of the United Jewish Communities (UJC) in Washington to help secure the funding for a number of funding programs vital to easing the burden of the economic downturn.

The Federal Fiscal 2009 budget included \$200 million for Emergency Food and Shelter Funding and the 2009 economic stimulus package (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act-ARRA) provided an additional \$100 million to insure that the food pantries of our nation and local communities are fully stocked as the demand for food assistance grows. Congress also passed an extension from 7 years to 9 the period that elderly and disabled can receive supplemental Social Security Insurance (SSI) benefits. The SSI extension was a joint priority of UJC and the Hebrew Immigrant Aide Society to restore benefits to 8000 refugees from the former Soviet Union.

Through ARRA, UJC and state federations secured a long sought increase of the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) for Medicaid reimbursement to the various states. An upward adjustment in FMAP assists states, experiencing severe budget deficits, avert cuts that would eliminate or reduce health care services for the most vulnerable. ARRA "Medicaid reimbursement represents a significant source of funding for the critical health care services our Jewish federations provide, noted Diane Naar, Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Somerset Hunterdon and Warren. The FMAP increase will help ensure that affordable medical and nursing home care will be available when needed most."

Rutgers University Study in Israel Program Defended

State Association President Roy Tanzman, Vice-President Herb Klein and Executive Director Jacob Toporek met with Richard McCormick, President of Rutgers, The State University, to discuss the university's decision to cancel its Spring 2009 semester "Study in Israel" program. The meeting was requested by the State Association in conjunction with Rutgers Hillel and the American Jewish Committee.

The State Association representatives acknowledged that, although the school's decision was well-intentioned, the unintended ramifications of such a decision, that is, the message sent by the Rutgers decision, was very much a concern. "It unintentionally declared that Israel is a dangerous place to visit, to do business and, for these students and future students, an unsafe place to further one's studies," Vice-President Klein told President McCormick.

The meeting secured an understanding from Rutgers that the RU Crisis Management Team would consult with students and the families involved and reach out to leaders of the affected communities prior to making an official announcement of cancellation. Commenting on the agreement reached, State Association President Tanzman noted, "We welcomed the commitment stated by President McCormick to continue the Study in Israel program in the future and that the Rutgers decision did in no way represent a boycott of Israel."

State and Federal Legislation Enacted With Support of State Association

State

SJR62/AJR102, a joint resolution celebrating Israel @ 60, was signed by Governor Corzine in public ceremonies at the offices of the UJA of Northern New Jersey in Wayne, NJ. The joint resolution, introduced by Bergen County legislators Senators Loretta Weinberg and Robert Gordon and Assemblyman Gordon Johnson and Valerie Vainieri Huttler, was the culmination of a year of activities, programs and observances of this milestone anniversary sponsored by the State Association's 12 constituent federations and their beneficiary agencies.

The offices of the UJA of Northern New Jersey also served as the site where legislation (S2240/A3162) giving permanent status to the NJ-Israel Commission was signed by Governor Corzine. Joining the same Bergen County legislators as prime sponsors of the bill were Assembly members Gary Schaer (Passaic), Caroline Casagrande and Declan O'Scanlon from Monmouth County and Caridad Rodriguez (Hudson). NNJ Executive Vice President Howard Charish was pleased to host the public ceremony noting, "There is no greater evidence of the strength of the bond that continues to exist between the people of New Jersey and Israel than the NJ-Israel Commission."

Assemblyman Schaer initiated A3186 together with Patrick Diegnan (Middlesex), to provide for adjustment and notice of date on which certain elections can occur if the date coincides with period of religious observance. Governor Corzine signed the bill into law on January 13, 2009. This legislation was a result of a situation in Edison, NJ where a school board referendum was scheduled on Rosh Hashanah. The State Association was one of several organizations instrumental in securing a change of policy and election date from the Edison Board of Education. "The new law eliminates the conflict a citizen would have to face in choosing between the exercise of the right to vote and the personal observance of the tenets of his/her faith," acknowledged Danny Goldberg, Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Ocean County.

Federal

The State Association joined UJC lead efforts to enact within the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act (H.R. 1424) the extension for two years, until December 31, 2010, of the IRA Charitable Rollover tax provision that provides persons aged 70½ and older with incentives to contribute to charity out of their individual retirement accounts without suffering adverse tax consequences. These rollover contributions have become an essential funding source for vital Jewish education, health, and social service programs.

With the State Association secured support of NJ's US Senators and 9 congressmen, UJC was successful in legislating, for the first time, a \$5 million authorization for Aging in Place/NORC funding for 12-15 demonstration projects. The State Association will lend assistance to obtain \$10 million in the 2010 Federal budget. The Omnibus Bill also contained funding for two designated programs, the NORC of the Jewish Federation of Princeton Mercer Bucks County and a mental health project of the Jewish Family Service of MetroWest.

As noted previously, together with UJC, the State Association and its constituent federations advocated for an increase of the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage and for \$300 million for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP). In another successful congressional initiative, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits were extended from 7 years to a maximum of 9 years for elderly and disabled immigrants, including 8000 Jews from the former Soviet Union whose naturalization papers have been delayed.

SAVE THE DATE: Annual Meeting - June 23, 2009 at the Offices of Wilentz, Goldman, Spitzer - 90 Woodbridge Center Drive, Woodbridge (732-986-4498). Guest speaker Commissioner David Socolow of the NJ Department of Labor will brief the Board as to state and federal employment resources and programs, state budget outlook and other matters of concern to the Jewish Federation community.