

Governor Phil Murphy

On Holocaust Remembrance Day, Governor Murphy Signs Bill Requiring Survey to Evaluate Holocaust and Genocide Curriculum in New Jersey's Public Schools

04/17/2023

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed legislation (A4720) requiring the Commissioner of Education, in conjunction with the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, to craft and distribute a survey for public schools relating to educational instruction on the Holocaust and genocide. The survey will measure how each school district is meeting the State's current requirement that every board of education include instruction on the Holocaust and genocide in an appropriate place in the curriculum of all elementary and secondary school students. The signing of this legislation, on Holocaust Remembrance Day, underscores the Governor's commitment to combating antisemitism while ensuring the promise of 'never again' is instilled in future generations.

"By taking this action today, we are honoring the memory of the six million Jews and the millions of others murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust," **said Governor Murphy**. "As we witness truth being stripped from education systems in other states and antisemitism on the rise across the country, our responsibility to future generations must be to lead by example and defend the promise with which our nation was founded – equality and freedom for all. This law guarantees that our children will be prepared with the knowledge and understanding necessary to learn from the mistakes of history and build a world that is stronger and more united than ever before."

The bill requires that the Commissioner of Education, within 60 days, develop the survey which will focus on how each district is meeting instruction requirements. The survey will be comprised of questions for all grade levels and will inquire about curriculum content, learning goals, instructional strategies, and other factors.

"As each generation is born, time distances us from the events of the Holocaust and fewer survivors are able to share their personal accounts. This leaves our society exposed to the risk of a lack of awareness of genocide events," **said Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Commissioner of Education**. "Governor Murphy's signing of this legislation, in conjunction with the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, is integral to ensuring that elementary and secondary students will receive the educational insights they need to garner a deep understanding of the Holocaust as we educate to prevent future genocide events."

Primary sponsors of the bill include Senators Linda Greenstein and Vin Gopal and Assemblymembers Gary Schaer, Lisa Swain, and Robert Karabinchak.

"Given the recent spike in anti-Semitic attacks, it is imperative that we continue to modify our teaching methods to adequately convey the horrors of the Holocaust," **said Senator Greenstein**. "This law is a critical first step to collecting enough data and research to properly address any discrepancies or outdated Holocaust teaching materials."

"The death and devastation wrought by the Holocaust represents one of the great human tragedies of the last century, or any century, claiming the lives of some 6 million Jews, as well as millions of other ethnic and religious minorities," **said Senator Gopal**. "I am proud to sponsor legislation that seeks to educate our students about this horrific episode, as well as other genocides, so that these events are never forgotten. The lessons the Holocaust have to teach are now more important than ever, as we live a time when anti-Semitism and other forms of hate are on the rise. This law represents one important countermeasure we can use to teach tolerance and to embrace our common humanity."

"On New Jersey Holocaust Remembrance Day, we honor the 6 million Jews who were stolen from us during one of the most inhumane and gruesome tragedies in history. We are also reminded of our shared responsibility to keep the memory of those who perished alive, ensuring this can never happen again," **said Assemblyman Schaer**. "New Jersey is proudly home to one of the largest Jewish populations in the United States. Our communities have felt the brunt of the recent rise in antisemitism. Education is one of the best tools to combat hate and reduce antisemitic incidents from occurring. That is why it is critical to ensure our K-12 schools are delivering the best, most-accurate Holocaust education possible to students."

Within 180 days of this act going into effect, the Commissioner must provide a detailed report of the survey's findings to the Governor and the Legislature, including any recommendations for improvement. This survey will ensure that curriculum standards and expectations are being met across New Jersey, and serves as an opportunity to swiftly highlight concerns and take corrective action.

"We would like to thank the Legislature and Governor for supporting the Jewish Federations of New Jersey's efforts in bolstering Holocaust Education throughout New Jersey," **said Harris Laufer, State Director Jewish Federations of New Jersey**. "Education and awareness are among the most effective ways to stem the rising tide of antisemitism and hate. We look forward to continued advocacy and collaboration on combatting antisemitism and hate throughout New Jersey."

"StandWithUs thanks Governor Murphy for signing into law Bill A4720/S3145, a significant measure aimed at improving much-needed Holocaust and genocide education in the state's public schools," **said Avi Posnick, StandWithUs Northeast Director**. "StandWithUs created a Holocaust Education Center (HEC) and we hope the bill's passage and ensuing recommendations will allow us to partner with more school districts and the NJ

Holocaust Commission to bring HEC's user-friendly presentations to NJ schools. Holocaust education is essential all year round so that students can understand the extreme dangers of antisemitism, racism and any form of hate, and, learn how to stand up against them."

Thank you to Governor Phil Murphy for taking this critical next step to fight antisemitism and all forms of hate in New Jersey," said **Scott Richman, ADL New York/New Jersey Regional Director**. "New Jersey's long-standing commitment to Holocaust education is essential. Surveys by the ADL Center for Antisemitism Research ([https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/vlibej/nrddit/7uxqf3_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!MWFchtLxx6moBpcaWLnRc7Gm5z31jX_zbTjcZrrD-ECJf0sPRZtdY61TKoHAL0fNkoh64vKfF71UjhpGFH1Q3XZJo8\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/vlibej/nrddit/7uxqf3_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!MWFchtLxx6moBpcaWLnRc7Gm5z31jX_zbTjcZrrD-ECJf0sPRZtdY61TKoHAL0fNkoh64vKfF71UjhpGFH1Q3XZJo8$)) show that those with basic information about the Holocaust are significantly less likely to believe antisemitic ideas. This legislation could not be more timely or urgent, as ADL documented a record number of antisemitic incidents in New Jersey in 2022. Data drives policy, and the results of this important survey will help ensure hate has no place in New Jersey."

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