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200 Jewish Leaders Gather in Sacramento for JPAC's Annual Policy Conference, Meet with Three Quarters of California's Legislature in Major Lobbying Effort for Jewish Community Priorities

JPAC Advocacy Day Brings Together Lawmakers and Jewish Leaders to Further Legislation Focused on Combating Antisemitism and Hate, and Expanding Services for Immigrants and Older Adults

On May 9-10, 2022, the Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California (JPAC) convened 200 Jewish professional and lay leaders from across California in Sacramento for JPAC Advocacy Day, the organization's premier annual policy conference and advocacy experience. Coinciding with JPAC's 50th anniversary, the two-day gathering of Jewish organization executives, board members, professional fellows, and other staff and lay leaders was among the largest in JPAC's history. Fifty students and young professionals also joined the conference.

Returning in person for the first time in three years, the JPAC Advocacy Day featured keynote addresses from California's **Lieutenant Governor, Ambassador Eleni Kounalakis**, and **Attorney General Rob Bonta**, who each expressed their resolve to fighting antisemitism and working in partnership with JPAC on social and human service initiatives. More than 30 legislators participated in the conference. The program culminated with participants converging on the state capitol for meetings with 88 legislative offices, representing three quarters of the state's 118 legislators (there are currently 2 vacant seats).

The conference was themed around JPAC's top legislative priorities: combating antisemitism and hate, and expanding services for immigrants and older adults. Advocacy efforts focused on six bills and two budget items.

These priorities, along with JPAC's expanded list of priority items, can be found at:
<https://jpac-cal.org/our-work/2022-legislative-agenda/>

"At JPAC, we're committed to upholding two core pillars: We fight for issues that directly support the Jewish community, and we fight for issues that directly further Jewish values," **said David Bocarsly, JPAC's Executive Director.** "In this moment, those pillars are manifesting into an acute need to fight antisemitism and hatred, and to support immigrants and older adults. At JPAC Advocacy, California's diverse Jewish community came together as one voice to forcefully assert the importance of these issues to state lawmakers. We pushed large-scale, life-changing bills, and asked for over \$300 million from the state budget to accomplish our key initiatives. We know this bold and unprecedented agenda is achievable because we've seen a glimpse of what's possible when we unite as a community. This week, we showed our community's strength in a powerful way, which will elevate our priorities this year and our work for years to come."

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“This week, JPAC celebrated its 50th anniversary as California’s organized Jewish community convener with one of our biggest ever annual advocacy conferences,” **said Allison Gingold, JPAC’s Board Chair**. “We were proud to network with key legislators and community leaders to address today’s crucial issues through a Jewish lens. I am proud of our legislative agenda which exemplifies the social justice imperatives of Judaism while rooting out the evils of antisemitism and hate. This year’s conference was our strongest ever and we are grateful for our longstanding partnerships and alliances we have created to achieve our collective goals.”

Dinner with the Jewish Caucus

As part of the conference, JPAC hosted a dinner with the California Legislative Jewish Caucus.

Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel, Jewish Caucus Chair, and **Senator Scott Wiener**, Jewish Caucus Vice Chair, spoke about how JPAC’s partnership with the Jewish Caucus has led to the increased success for Jewish community priorities in recent years. Since 2019, the Jewish Caucus and JPAC have secured over \$100 million from the state budget for key priorities and have helped pass dozens of bills that support the security and prosperity of Jews and all vulnerable communities. Assemblymember Gabriel and Senator Wiener presented Gingold and Bocarsly with a resolution from the State Assembly honoring JPAC’s 50 years of advocacy. In addition to Gabriel and Wiener, ten other members of the Jewish Caucus attended and spoke briefly at the dinner.

Panels

In line with the legislative priorities, JPAC hosted three panels:

1. “Combating Hate Through Coalition-Building,” featuring **Senator Sydney Kamlager**, **Assemblymember Laura Friedman**, Stop AAPI Hate’s Legislative Director **Santosh Seeram-Santana**, and NewGround Lay Leader **Shawn Landres**, and moderated by Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles’s Senior VP of Community Engagement Joanna Mendelson.
2. “Rising to the Moment in a Time of Crisis: Serving Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers,” featuring **Senator Melissa Hurtado**, **Assemblymember Joaquin Arambula**, California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC) Executive Director **Cynthia Buiza**, and Jewish Family Service of San Diego CEO **Michael Hopkins**, and moderated by HIAS Western Region Community Engagement Director **Joe Goldman**.
3. “Pulling Back the Curtains: What it’s Like to Be a Young Professional in the Capitol,” featuring Chief Deputy Legislative Secretary for Governor Newsom **Melissa Immel**, Assembly Chief of Staff **Claire Conlon**, and Lobbyist **Nick Brokaw**, and moderated by JPAC Board Member **Adam Sieff**.

Awards

JPAC presented three awards to key leaders at JPAC Advocacy Day:

1. **Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian** received the Jerry Sampson Memorial Award for Legislator of the Year for championing services for older adults and Holocaust survivors; being a vocal ally against antisemitism and in favor of community security initiatives; and being a vital bridge-builder between the Jewish and Armenian communities.
2. The Earl Raab Award for an esteemed lay leader was presented to **Lynn Bunim**, JPAC’s Board Chair from 2019-2020. Bunim returned as Interim Board Chair during the second half of 2021 while Gingold served as Interim Executive Director during their Executive Director search. Bunim guided JPAC through the tumultuous time of the pandemic and the fight for an appropriate Ethnic Studies curriculum, and she chaired the Executive Director Search Committee.
3. **Nancy Kirshner-Rodriguez** was honored with the Barbara Yaroslavsky Award for a woman leading in Jewish civic engagement. Kirshner-Rodriguez worked in the Clinton and (Mayor) Newsom administrations, led the state Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, and has served on the boards of the JCRC of San Francisco-Bay Area and the National Council of Jewish Women.

JPAC Advocacy Day was held in-person at the Citizen Hotel in Sacramento and at the Capitol Annex Swing Space, where the legislators have their offices while the State Capitol is under construction. The number of lobby meetings and the number of legislators who participated in the conference each represent all-time highs.

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JPAC Advocacy Day was canceled in 2020 as it coincided with the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, and was held virtually in 2021.

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The Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California (JPAC) is the voice of California's Jewish community to the State Capitol, and the largest single-state coalition of Jewish organizations in the nation. Comprised of 30 leading Jewish community organizations – including Jewish Federations, Jewish Community Relations Councils, Jewish Family Service agencies, and [others](#) – we advocate in Sacramento on behalf of the Jewish community's concerns and broadly shared values. Our member organizations collectively serve hundreds of thousands of Californians of all backgrounds and represent the interests of California's 1.2 million Jews. For more information, visit us at <http://jpac-cal.org>.