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The Jewish community values the support of the New York congressional delegation and the many initiatives sponsored by our representatives and senators. These measures reflect a deep and abiding commitment to issues of concern to the Jewish community. As we meet with our Congressional Delegation on January 22, 2012, we take stock of our mutual concerns and priorities, and ask Congress to take note of the following issues, supported by a broad consensus in the Jewish community and considered to be high on our agenda.

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In May, Prime Minister Netanyahu addressed a joint meeting of Congress to share his views on how the United States and Israel can “continue working together for peace, freedom, and stability.” Photo credit: Government Press Office, Israel.

## THE U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

In a November 2011 speech to supporters in New York City, President Barack Obama declared that to the United States, “No ally is more important than the State of Israel.” The bond between the U.S. and Israel is strong, stemming from mutual interests and shared values, and many elements of this relationship are a natural outgrowth of that friendship. Congress’ reception to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s May 24, 2011 appearance before a Joint Session reflected the deep and abiding nature of the relationship.

In the U.S., positive attitudes towards Israel go beyond the leadership level. As the political turmoil and change in the Middle East continues, multiple public opinion polls report that a majority of American voters continue to show strong backing for the Jewish state, reflecting Israel’s special status as a fellow democracy and America’s closest ally in the Middle East.

As New Yorkers, we are thrilled that the New York-Israel relationship will reach a new level as the Cornell/Technion partnership builds a new high-tech campus as the winner of the Applied Sciences NYC initiative.

## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The ongoing contact between Pentagon officials and their counterparts in Tel Aviv, the joint development of military technology and expanding joint training exercises are all hallmarks of the unprecedented strategic partnerships between the United States and Israel. High level strategic cooperation, intelligence sharing and military training benefit both countries. Israeli life-saving techniques, tactics and equipment are all helping to protect U.S. troops in harm’s way. The Arrow and Iron Dome systems — jointly developed by U.S. and Israeli contractors — are among the world’s most sophisticated anti-missile shields.

In 2011, record numbers of Marines and Israeli troops participated in joint urban warfare drills. In 2012, the Juniper Cobra and Austere Challenge exercises will comprise more than 5,000 U.S. and Israeli troops. During the exercises, U.S. command posts will be established in Israel and Israeli command posts at EUCOM. We applaud this effort contributing to the safety and security of American and Israeli interests.

## SECURITY ASSISTANCE

As Andrew Shapiro, U.S. Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs explained, “The most direct tool that the

United States uses to ensure Israel's qualitative military edge is security assistance." Challenges ranging from the potential of a nuclear-armed Iran to the expanding military capabilities of the terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah make it increasingly difficult and expensive for Israel to support its defense spending without security assistance. Nearly 75% of Security Assistance funds are spent in the United States on weapons and other needed supplies.

In 2010, the Administration requested, and Congress appropriated, \$205 million to support the production of the Israeli "Iron Dome" short-range rocket defense system. Since its deployment in Israel, the Iron Dome has protected thousands of Israeli civilians from increasing rocket attacks emanating from Gaza. In addition, American and Israeli military engineers are co-developing the Arrow-3 interceptor to rebuff long range ballistic missile attacks and are upgrading Israel's Patriot Air and Missile Defense System. Furthermore, we thank the Administration for deploying an advanced radar system to provide Israel with early warning of incoming missiles.

We recognize Congress' continued and unwavering support for the Jewish state, including the passing of the annual foreign aid bill for fiscal year 2012. This package includes nearly \$3.1 billion in security assistance to Israel in the fourth year of a 10-year U.S.-Israel security agreement, signed in 2007. We applaud what Secretary of State Hilary R. Clinton called America's "unshakable commitment to Israel's security," and thank our delegation for the work already done and urge them to safeguard the program during the budget negotiations.

### **U.S. ELECTION 2012**

Since its inception, the State of Israel has enjoyed a bond of friendship and partnership with the United States that transcends politics. Support for Israel was never an ideological or partisan issue; it is an issue that unites Democrats and Republicans alike. As the 2012 elections progress we welcome the broad, deep, bipartisan support for Israel.

In December 2011, the likely 2012 candidates spoke to Jewish audiences: President Obama to Jewish supporters in New York and to the Union for Reform Judaism Biennial Convention; and (then candidate) Michele Bachmann, Newt Gingrich, Jon Huntsman, Rick Perry, Mitt Romney and Rick Santorum addressed a Republican Jewish Coalition forum. All were crystal clear in their support for Israel and their concern about

Iran. We are also grateful that the strong support for Israel spans the aisles in the Senate and the House.

We favor a full airing of the critical, public policy matters. Elections should provide the American people with an opportunity to gauge where candidates stand on critical issues, and campaigns should feel free to question opponents about the efficacy of all of their respective positions within a framework of civility and mutual respect.

## **IRAN**

During the past year, a deeply isolated and combative Iranian regime has increasingly distanced itself from the international community on a range of substantive issues: its expanding illicit nuclear program, its abysmal human rights record, and its continued support of international terrorist organizations. This uniquely volatile mix is potentially explosive, with Iran continuing as the pre-eminent foreign policy and national security challenge facing the United States and the international community. We applaud the Administration, as well as leaders in Congress, for understanding that the unique challenge posed by Iran demands a uniquely flexible policy response that keeps all options on the table. As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey recently remarked, it would be a mistake for Iran to "miscalculate (U.S.) resolve."

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## **"IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE FOR IRAN TO MISCALCULATE (U.S.) RESOLVE."**

**— CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
GENERAL MARTIN DEMPSEY**

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As Iran continues to heighten tensions in the region, nearly all of its neighbors are deeply concerned about Iran's efforts to play the role of regional hegemon. It is clear that Iran's reckless behavior poses a threat to the United States, the Middle East more generally, and the broader international community. This threat has been perfectly encapsulated by Iran's recent threats to close the Strait of Hormuz to shipping traffic. Closing the Strait, through which nearly one-fifth of the global oil supply is transported, would have a profoundly negative impact on the global economy.

## NUCLEAR PROGRAM

Despite several welcome setbacks to the Iranian nuclear program — most notably the recent opening of a new centrifuge installation at the underground Fardo facility near Qom — Iran continues to pursue its illicit nuclear program. Iran is now believed to have 6,208 active centrifuges and a significant stockpile of 20 percent enriched uranium, increasingly close to bomb grade requirements.

The reality of Iran's continuing efforts in this regard was brought to the world's attention again this past November when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) released specific information regarding the true objectives of the country's ongoing nuclear program. Based on intelligence from 15 nations, the report detailed a range of activities that are consistent with a full-fledged weapons program, not the civilian program Iran claims to be operating. The IAEA identified Iranian activities specific to nuclear weapons, including the modeling of nuclear explosions, the development of warhead designs, and efforts to secure fissile material outside of its civilian program.

In an effort to secure its nuclear facilities against a potential military strikes, it is widely believed that Iran has moved much of its nuclear infrastructure, including centrifuges and other equipment, into numerous geographically dispersed underground bunkers.

## MISSILE DEVELOPMENT

The combination of Iran's nuclear progress along with continuing efforts to improve the capabilities of the country's medium and long-range missiles escalates the threat to the entire region. Currently, the most formidable tool in Iran's arsenal is the Shahab-3, with a range of up to 1,100 kilometers, and the regime is testing the so called Sajjil, a missile that can travel up to 2,400 km, bringing American allies in Israel, Turkey, the Persian Gulf, and American forces deployed throughout the region into striking distance.

## SANCTIONS

Clearly, the sanctions programs have an impact upon Iran's economy. We commend the Administration for imposing additional sanctions on Iran's petrochemical and financial industries and Congress' passage of legislation targeting Iran's Central Bank, the strongest ever. These efforts will severely damage Iran's ability to access international oil markets. The European Union also tightened sanctions and has agreed in principle

to a blanket ban on the import of Iranian petroleum products. We applaud the New York State Assembly and Senate for introducing legislation (based on similar laws in California and Florida) to prevent firms doing more than \$20 million in business in Iran from holding contracts with the respective state or municipal governments in New York.

Sanctions programs are a blow to both Iran's economy and to its internal politics. According to the IMF, Iran is currently experiencing inflation of over 20 percent, and financial sanctions by Western nations are severely limiting the ability of Iranian businesses to conduct transactions internationally. Recent months have also seen a significant devaluation of Iran's currency, the rial, now at a third of its pre-sanctions value. Internal battles over a range of issues, including the state of the economy, have effectively driven a wedge between Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his onetime supporters within the clerical establishment. Until Iran discontinues its nuclear program, JCRC-NY urges the Administration and the global community to continue imposing crippling sanctions on the Iranian regime and to keep all options on the table.

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## ISRAEL NEEDS A PARTNER FOR PEACE.

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### HUMAN RIGHTS

JCRC-NY applauds the commitment of the Administration to advancing the cause of human rights in Iran. We also strongly support the efforts of the United Nation's new Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, Ahmed Shaheed, to shed light on Iran's deteriorating human rights situation. As detailed by Mr. Shaheed, the Iranian regime continues to systematically discriminate against women, ethnic and religious minorities, and a range of political dissidents. Iran also maintained its past horrific rate of executions during 2011 — 518 known executions, with potentially hundreds more secret ones. Recently, American Amir Hekmati was sentenced to death on trumped up espionage charges. In response to these continuing abuses, we welcomed the Obama Administration's imposition of sanctions against Hassan Firouzabadi chairman of Iran's Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Abdollah Araqi, Deputy Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

We also welcome the release of Shane Bauer and Josh Fattal following more than two years of incarceration on trumped up charges. We continue to hope for the speedy release of former FBI agent Bob Levinson, who has been held in Iran for over four years by an undetermined group.

### **SPONSORING TERRORISM**

According to the U.S. State Department, Iran continues to be the world's leading state sponsor of terror. This support for international terrorism is most pronounced in the Middle East. Iran has attempted to prop up the tottering Syrian regime while it actively undermines regional stability through its support for Hezbollah and Hamas, as well as various militant groups in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, as evidenced by the terror plot targeting the Saudi Ambassador in Washington D.C., the efforts of the regime have become more ambitious and dangerous. We welcome the news that, due to economic setbacks resulting from international sanctions, Iran has been forced to cut its financial aid to Hezbollah by 25 percent. Unfortunately in response, Hezbollah increased its involvement in drugs and organized crime to offset its loss of income.

Iran continues to cultivate ties with anti-American entities in Latin American (especially Venezuela) and Africa in an attempt to break its international isolation and damage America's interests abroad.

### **ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS**

Israel needs a partner for peace. Unfortunately, throughout much of the past year, the Palestinian leadership has consistently left Israel seated alone at the negotiating table. Certainly, any lasting peace agreement will require face-to-face dialogue, sacrifice and compromise from the Israelis and the Palestinians alike. As Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has stated, a true and lasting "peace will be achieved only through direct negotiations" and "painful concessions" from each party. The peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan and the unilateral withdrawals from Gaza and Lebanon prove that Israel is ready to take dramatic and painful risks in pursuit of peace.

Further complicating the peace prospects is the recent announcement of a prospective reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah. Hamas has proven that it is not a viable peace partner, as it rejects Israel's right to exist and actively seeks its destruction.

An official Hamas announcement on December 27, 2011 stated: "We underline our adherence to our right to the struggle in all its forms, particularly the armed struggle, for the removal of the occupation. The way of resistance, jihad, and martyrdom for Allah has proved that it is the only way to forcefully attain our rights and the liberation of our land." Until Hamas proves that it is truly committed to the stated conditions of the Mideast Quartet (composed of the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations) in 2007 — renouncing violence, recognizing Israel, and accepting previous agreements — Hamas' involvement undermines the *bona fides* of the Palestinian Authority's commitment to be a partner in the process to end the conflict.

Prime Minister Netanyahu has repeatedly called for the resumption of negotiations without preconditions, and the Jewish community applauds the efforts of the Administration and the Quartet in attempting to restart negotiations. Ultimately, the issues on the table for negotiation will have to be sorted out by the parties themselves, for a true and lasting peace to be achieved.

### **UNILATERAL DECLARATIONS**

In September 2011, President Mahmoud Abbas submitted an application to the UN Security Council on behalf of the Palestinian Authority for full member state status. While the Israeli government respects the right of the Palestinian people to a state of their own, this can only be achieved through direct, bilateral negotiations between the two parties.

In his recent speech before the UN General Assembly, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu summed up Israel's standpoint saying, "The truth is that Israel wants peace with a Palestinian State, but the Palestinians want a state without peace... We cannot achieve peace through UN resolutions, but only through direct negotiations." The Palestinians' attempt to unilaterally declare a state through the UN enables them to avoid negotiations with Israel, the very party with whom a future Palestinian state will share borders. Unilateral declarations, Palestinian admission to UNESCO or other UN bodies will not lead to peace, nor will their stated intentions to relaunch their unilateral actions this February. Rather, they pose setbacks to the peace process and fail to deal with Israel's legitimate security concerns.

## INTERNATIONAL

The Jewish community applauds President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton for their principled decision to vote against granting full membership status in UNESCO to the Palestinian Authority. In addition, we praise the Administration for immediately cutting off US funding to the body as a consequence of the vote, which triggered the provisions of the Limitation on Contributions to the United Nations and Affiliated Organizations Statute of 1994. We appreciate Congress' foresight and ongoing commitment to direct negotiations.

In opposition to a unilaterally declared Palestinian state, JCRC-NY created a petition and collected over 107,000 unique signatures from all over the United States calling for the immediate resumption of peace talks between the two parties.

Congress should continue to pursue measures to urge President Abbas to end the climate of political deadlock and, in the words of President Obama, "pursue a two-state solution with a secure Israel next to an independent Palestine."

## GAZA AND HAMAS

Over the past year, Israel has had to meet the challenge of protecting its civilians from increasing numbers of rocket and mortar attacks emanating from the Gaza Strip. In 2011, Hamas terrorists fired 581 rockets and 292 mortars into Israel, nearly a four-fold increase from 150 rocket attacks (and 215 mortar attacks) in 2010. Israel's deployment of the Iron Dome missile defense system has been successful, and it intercepted many of the rocket attacks against Israel's major southern cities, including Beersheba, Ashkelon, and Ashdod.

As Hamas continues to arm itself with missiles with longer ranges and the capability to inflict greater damage, Israel may be forced once again to take military action within Gaza to protect the lives of its civilians. On December 27, 2011, IDF Chief of Staff Benny Gantz effectively relayed Israel's current escalating security concerns saying, "The State of Israel cannot continue to live under the active threat of Hamas in the Gaza Strip."

When it suits their needs, the Hamas security forces have prevented additional terrorist acts by smaller

organizations, such as Islamic Jihad and Popular Resistance Committees. Hamas has the ability and the responsibility to make an ongoing, rather than selective, effort to limit — if not completely stop — all attacks on Israeli civilians. Rather than halting attacks, Hamas — which is closely aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood and trained and funded by Iran — allows an escalating number of missile and mortar attacks and is rearming itself.

## FREEDOM FOR GILAD SHALIT

On October 18, 2011, as part of a prisoner swap between Israel and Hamas, Israeli Cpl. Gilad Shalit returned to his family and his home in Israel after remaining in captivity in Gaza for over five years. In return for Shalit's freedom, the Israeli government released 1,027 Palestinian prisoners, each convicted of terrorist activity against Israel and its civilians. Emboldened by the large number of prisoners freed by Israel for the return of just one Israeli soldier, we are concerned that Palestinian terrorists may attempt to ambush and kidnap additional Israeli soldiers in the future. Knowing that terrorism does not lend to the hope of a true and lasting peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, the Jewish community prays that these individuals will not return to their former terrorist activities.

## ISRAELI MIAS AND POWS

While Gilad Shalit is slowly recovering from his imprisonment, other Israeli soldiers remain missing, with no information as to their whereabouts: Zachary Baumel (a U.S. citizen); Yehudah Katz and Zvi Feldman, who were captured in 1982 during the battle of Sultan Yaqub; Ron Arad, captured in 1986; Guy Chever, who disappeared in 1997; and Majdy Halabi, a Druse soldier who has been missing since May 24, 2005. The Administration and Congress should continue the State Department mandate to raise the plight of these missing soldiers in all relevant Middle East discussions and report the findings to Congress. More aggressive action needs to be taken to broadcast the message that these acts of brutality will not be tolerated.

## ATTEMPTING TO DELEGITIMIZE ISRAEL

In recent years, a concerted, organized and well financed campaign to delegitimize Israel has

intensified. A global network of organizations has emerged to urge the use of boycotts, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) as a tactic to isolate the State of Israel. The BDS movement goes well beyond criticism of Israel's policies; it seeks to distort the history and national aspirations of the Jewish people and their continuous connection with their homeland for more than three millennia. Rather than seeking a two-state solution — with Israel and Palestine living peacefully side by side — BDS proponents advocate a one-state solution where Israel, as an independent state, ceases to exist. For these reasons, the BDS movement must be treated as an existential danger to Israel and destructive to the peace process. The Jewish community urges that elected officials join us in our efforts to counter the BDS tactics.

### UNIVERSAL JURISDICTION

Another method of delegitimizing Israel is through a perversion of Universal Jurisdiction — a principle in international law whereby any nation may claim criminal jurisdiction over persons committing specific crimes violating preemptory norms (*jus cogens*) outside a state's boundaries. The trials of Eichman and Pinochet are two prominent and appropriate uses of this principle. Limiting arrests under this principle in 2002, the International Court of Justice decided that when abroad, state officials enjoy full immunity from arrest in another state on criminal charges, including charges of war crimes or crimes against humanity, even though they may be subject to criminal proceedings before certain international criminal courts, where they do have jurisdiction.

Over the past decade, several countries have misused this legal procedure to issue warrants for the arrest of some Israeli political and military officials including Avi Dichter, former Minister of Public Security and former head of the Shin Bet (internal security agency), retired Israeli General Doron Almog, ex-Israeli Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, and Opposition Leader M.K. Tzipi Livni.

That so many important figures of Israel's political leadership find themselves the victims of this attempt at "political morality," while so many obviously guilty of crimes against humanity travel the world with impunity, highlights the ludicrous double standard at play. More must be done to prevent the abuse of Universal Jurisdiction from becoming a frequent tool of Israel-bashers abroad.

### PROSPECT OF A NEW MIDDLE EAST

The ongoing unrest and the wave of elections throughout the Middle East bring both celebration and concern. As Secretary of State Clinton has noted: "Transitions require fair and inclusive elections, but they also demand the embrace of democratic norms and rules. We expect all democratic actors to uphold universal human rights, including women's rights, to allow free religious practice." Years ago, the eminent historian of the American Revolution, Gordon S. Wood, observed that "it is not suffrage that gives life to democracy; it is our democratic society that gives life to suffrage." That principle continues to be germane in today's fast-changing world.

While some identified as spokespeople of Islamist parties have explicitly endorsed such a democratic society, the likelihood that their views will prevail seems to be diminishing. Rather, those embracing intolerance, violence and anti-West/anti-Israel positions may ultimately emerge to codify their views as law and policy.

The Assad regime's continuing, murderous attacks against its own civilians demonstrate that there is much more to be done. Congress' passage of the *Syria Accountability Act* and its attendant sanctions offer a path to reform, and we welcome the European oil embargo and the recent actions of the Arab League.

No one expects the potentially emergent democracies to be created in the West's image. Rather, there will be indigenous approaches to governance, reflecting newly-created relationships between those who govern and the governed. To be successful, the systems of governance must hold fast to democracy's norms and rules.

### UNITY OF JERUSALEM

Under Israeli sovereignty, Jerusalem is open to followers of all faiths, with access to all holy places. Jerusalem is the eternal, undivided capital of Israel, having been the historical and spiritual center of the Jewish people for more than 3,000 years. JCRC-NY thanks Congress for its efforts to ensure that Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount, remains united as the capital of the Jewish State. JCRC-NY reaffirms its endorsement of the *Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act of 1995*.



Water and fisheries experts from MASHAV, the humanitarian assistance arm of Israel's Foreign Ministry, are working with their German and Kenyan counterparts to develop alternative livelihood for the communities settled around Lake Victoria.

### DISASTER AND HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

The sage Hillel asked, “But if I am only for myself, who am I?” We proudly recognize the extraordinary responses of the Israeli government and American Jewish organizations to crises around the world.

An Israeli Defense Ministry delegation met with Turkish officials immediately following the devastating earthquake in October 2011. The Israeli officials offered a wide range of assistance, and the two countries agreed that Israel would donate temporary housing and hospital structures to assist in the relief efforts.

Over the past year, MASHAV, the humanitarian assistance arm of Israel's Foreign Ministry, responded to natural disasters and provided humanitarian assistance: in Thailand, Cambodia, El Salvador and Guatemala; responded to the drought afflicting the residents of the Horn of Africa; and assisted in the treatment of casualties from a devastating fuel line explosion in Kenya. MASHAV is currently in discussion with South Sudan about projects there.

As the world's leading Jewish humanitarian organization, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) has saved lives and rebuilt communities in the wake of natural disasters, war, and other crises worldwide for nearly 100 years. Deploying its team of experts and in partnership with local and international NGOs, JDC's robust disaster relief program includes the provision of food, clothing, fresh water, medicine, and temporary housing; post-trauma care; rebuilding schools and hospitals; and job-training, among other long-term development projects. In 2011 alone, JDC continued its efforts in Haiti by building a new, state-of-the-art, handicapped accessible school in Zoranje; helped thousands of injured Haitians through its Port Au Prince-based rehabilitation clinic and prosthetics lab; and expanded its renowned stuffed-animal-based post-trauma program to Japan to help Japanese children and their families in the wake of the Tsunami. Trauma specialists then trained Japanese teachers, nurses and other professionals in advanced trauma care. JDC also provided emergency food, medicine, clothing, and heaters after earthquakes in Turkey and New Zealand.

JDC chairs the Jewish Coalition for Disaster Response, bringing together over 45 U.S. and foreign Jewish agencies representing the full spectrum of Jewish life, to respond to humanitarian disasters. JDC coordinates all of its efforts with the Jewish Federations of North America, local Jewish communities overseas, the U.S. Department of State, USAID, Interaction, the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Israeli relief agencies, and the United Nations.

American Jewish World Service (AJWS) is an international development and human rights organization inspired by Judaism's commitment to justice. It provides long term grants to help 400 grassroots organizations in 30 countries empower women, promote economic justice and build civil society, and it offers service and service learning opportunities to volunteers from the American Jewish community every year. In 2011, AJWS continued its community rebuilding efforts in Haiti and provided significant relief aid and support for agricultural development in Kenya in response to the famine in Somalia.

## RIGHTS OF JEWISH REFUGEES FROM ARAB COUNTRIES

Since 1948, more than 850,000 Arab Jews have been uprooted from Arab countries. Most immigrated to Israel, where they now comprise over half the population. Nearly all were forced to leave their possessions behind as they fled and the governments generally confiscated their property. Yet, the international community has historically and disproportionately focused on Palestinian refugees, denying justice to displaced Jews who suffered mass violation of human rights in Arab lands since the founding of Israel.

JCRC-NY applauds the recent adoption of a House resolution recognizing the plight and flight of the Jewish refugees from Arab countries. It recognizes and defends the rights of Jewish and other refugees alongside those of Palestinian refugees. No peace can be reached in the Middle East without a parallel recognition and redress of the uprooting of centuries-old Jewish communities in Arab lands.

## RELATIONS WITH THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

This year, we are especially concerned that Russia has seen fit to work counter to the interests of the international community in its dealings with Iran and Syria. Congress and the Administration should continue to try to bring Russia in line with the initiatives of the United States and the European Union in the Middle East.

The United States should pursue policies towards the region based on principles that:

- promote a constructive, positive and institutionally robust, long-term relationship with the countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU), despite leadership changes and the persistence of contentious or outstanding issues;
- promote freedom of the press and other critical democratic institutions in all of the former republics;
- persuade FSU countries, which include moderate Muslim governments that have full diplomatic relations with Israel, to oppose biased anti-Israel UN resolutions and efforts to delegitimize Israel; and
- encourage Russia and other nations to develop new strategies to: support human rights and oppose anti-Semitism and xenophobia; enforce existing laws targeting violent extremists; expand local law enforcement training and grassroots civil society development; improve local health care; increase restitution of Jewish communal property; and, in cooperation with the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ), create cultural and educational opportunities for minorities.

## PROTECTING THE RELIGIOUS RIGHTS OF MINORITY POPULATIONS

In his 1790 letter to Touro Synagogue, George Washington set the bar for religious freedom in our country, writing: "the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance,

requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens, in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.” However, in many countries the rights of religious minorities are compromised or denied.

Tumultuous times underscore the importance of freedom of religion to peaceful political and economic development, democratic institutions, and flourishing societies. Religious freedom is the right of all human beings, a fundamental tenet of the 1948 *Universal Declaration on Human Rights*, and protected under the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. Guaranteeing religious freedom requires governments to enact and enforce strong laws and promote respect for religious diversity. These principles are especially important today, as so many governments are in a state of flux.

Our concerns grow when such principles are egregiously violated. In Nigeria on Christmas Day, 25 Christians were killed in two coordinated Church bombings orchestrated by an anti-West al-Qaeda affiliate, Boko Haram. This past October, when Egyptian Copts organized a peaceful march against religious persecution, they were met with violence

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## GUARANTEEING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REQUIRES GOVERNMENTS TO ENACT AND ENFORCE STRONG LAWS AND PROMOTE RESPECT FOR RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY.

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from Egyptian security forces leaving 36 dead and scores injured. Other attacks this year have come from Indonesia, Pakistan, Iraq, Turkey and Bulgaria, among others. Violations of religious freedom are not limited to violence and extremist acts, but also include active governmental repression, discrimination, the failure to take steps to curb intolerance, attacks, or

harassment or attempts to control religious thought. The increasingly frequent efforts to restrict religious garb, including Muslim attire, are disturbing.

### RITUAL SLAUGHTER AND CIRCUMCISION BANS

Two enduring religious practices — ritual slaughter and male circumcision — have special religious and cultural significance to the Jewish and Muslim communities. Attacks on both of these rites continue. We applaud the San Francisco Superior Court for removing the prescribed circumcision ban from the ballot; and the Dutch Senate for rejecting a bill that would have banned ritual slaughter. Furthermore, we encourage other governments and judiciaries to continue to protect the sacredness of such traditions.

### JEWISH CEMETERIES ABROAD

Cemeteries are traditionally maintained in perpetuity. Jewish history, religion and culture mandate the protection of Jewish cemeteries against desecration. In many places, this is not the case. Delicate negotiations are now underway in Greece, Spain and the former Soviet Union. Construction crews in these countries have unearthed tombstones and human skeletal remains from time-honored Jewish cemeteries. Recently, the Federation of Jewish Communities of Serbia protested the “catastrophic” conditions of the historic Jewish cemetery in the city of Nis and urged authorities to act against vandalism there.

We welcome efforts to identify, protect and memorialize the mass graves of Holocaust victims. JCRC-NY supports efforts to protect all these sacred sites from development or any other activity or use which desecrates them. *In cooperation with Asra Kadish and AJC.*

### FREE ALAN GROSS

Alan P. Gross, a 62 year old international development specialist from Washington DC, was sentenced to 15 years in a Cuban maximum-security facility for carrying out “acts to undermine the integrity and

independence” of Cuba. Gross was working for USAID when he was arrested in 2009 after establishing an intranet and improving access to the internet for the peaceful, non-dissident Jewish community. His appeal was denied.

Even though Gross may be improving, he lost nearly 100 pounds and is suffering from a number of serious health issues since his imprisonment. Several Members of Congress have spoken on the house floor in support of the immediate release of Gross on humanitarian grounds. Furthermore, we regret that President Raul Castro decided not to include Gross on a list of 2,900 prisoners pardoned in December 2011. The American Jewish community applauds all efforts to release this innocent man and encourages the Administration to continue placing pressure on the Cuban Government to release Alan Gross.

## ANTI-SEMITISM

“Anti-Semitism is not history. It’s today’s news,” said Hannah Rosenthal, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism for the U.S. Department of State. “Anti-Semitism is a concern of all people regardless of religion because it is grounded in hate, and hate destabilizes societies. It undermines democracy, human rights, and progress towards peace around the world.”

Within the discourse on the Arab-Israeli conflict, there is an increasing tendency to blur the lines between legitimate criticism of the State of Israel and anti-Semitism. While we recognize that Israel’s policies are certainly open to criticism and opposition, it is anti-Semitic: to demonize Israel or to hold it responsible for all the tensions in the world; when Israel is held to different standards than any other country; or when Israel is denied the right to exist as a Jewish state. This is a threat that the Jewish community takes most seriously.

Traditional forms of anti-Semitism continue to plague societies worldwide, with ongoing hostile acts such as the defacing of property, desecration of cemeteries,

and even accusations of blood libel. Anti-Semites increasingly use the internet as their preferred forum with an international reach. Holocaust denial is rampant. Their vicious messages can go viral using multiple social messaging outlets.

The 2010 FBI Hate Crime Statistics data show that 922 (65.4%) of the total 1,409 religiously motivated hate crimes nationwide took place due to anti-Jewish sentiment. While these numbers have decreased since the 2009 report (964 of 1,376, or 70.1%), the fact that the overwhelming majority of hate crimes is carried out against members of the Jewish faith is quite disturbing.

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**IT IS ANTI-SEMITIC: TO DEMONIZE ISRAEL OR TO HOLD IT RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THE TENSIONS IN THE WORLD; WHEN ISRAEL IS HELD TO DIFFERENT STANDARDS THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY; OR WHEN ISRAEL IS DENIED THE RIGHT TO EXIST AS A JEWISH STATE.**

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Over the years we have learned that official governmental voices and community leaders — speaking with moral clarity — can counteract the stridency of the haters. Hate crimes must be expeditiously and thoroughly investigated and those responsible must be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Today’s anti-Semitism is not new. It continues, embodying both new levels and new types of cooperation between the racist right, radical left and Jihadist Muslims. Regretfully, six decades after the Holocaust, society’s response must also continue. We are grateful that Congress’ enactment of the *Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990* and the *Global Anti-Semitism Review Act of 2004* directs the Administration to collect relevant data so that appropriate responses may be developed.

## DOMESTIC



On May 12th, Mayor Bloomberg, DA Vance and NYPD Commissioner Kelly updated New Yorkers about a plot to attack synagogues in Manhattan. Photo credit: NYC Mayors Office.

## HOMELAND SECURITY

New York City continues to be in the terrorist's crosshairs. Symbolic or iconic targets like Times Square seem to be the targets of choice, and the disruption of our economy remains a top goal. The death of Bin Laden does not mean that Al Qaeda is eliminated. Moreover, those inspired by Al Qaeda, both abroad and homegrown, are increasingly dangerous. The shootings in Oslo by a White supremacist remind us, in the words of John D. Cohen, Principal Deputy Counterterrorism Coordinator at the Department of Homeland Security, "What happened in Norway is a dramatic reminder that in trying to prevent attacks, we cannot focus on a single ideology."

Last May, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly and District Attorney Cyrus Vance, Jr. announced the arrest of two individuals plotting to bomb synagogues in Manhattan. That arrest came about due to the work of the NYPD Intelligence Division. New York has been the target of 18 plots or attacks since 1992 and eight of those incidents involved Jews or Jewish institutions. Clearly, the Jewish community has a stake in the continued effectiveness of the NYPD.

We are grateful for the efforts of the Intelligence Division and the entire NYPD to keep all New Yorkers safe.

It goes without saying that no threat would justify the NYPD or the FBI to operate in an unconstitutional manner. The Intelligence Division works under a set of federal court-sanctioned guidelines and no evidence has been presented that they violated the guidelines. Furthermore, we understand that the CIA Inspector General reviewed the relationship between the CIA and the NYPD and found that no laws were broken. Members of the New York Congressional delegation should support the effective, lawful and constitutional counterterrorism methods employed by the NYPD that protect all New Yorkers.

## NONPROFIT HOMELAND SECURITY GRANTS

Based on a competitive process, more than one-quarter of the grants are given to New York nonprofits, reflecting the Department of Homeland Security's assessment of New York's risk. In light of the ongoing threat, we are grateful that Congress, once again, included the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) budget. However this year, Congress left the allocation of various state grants to the discretion of the Secretary of DHS. We urge members of Congress to communicate their ongoing support of the NSGP to Secretary Napolitano and that the program should be funded at a level similar to past years.

## COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

Jewish teachings mandate that the stranger be welcomed and treated with respect. The Jewish community has long supported a fair and generous immigration policy consistent with our American and Jewish values. By welcoming immigrants, we stoke the engine of New York's growth and remain true to our core values of pluralism, freedom and opportunity.

JCRC-NY and UJA-Federation are committed to an immigration policy based on humanitarian rescue, family reunification and strengthening the United States economy. While remaining true to those general principles, America must ensure the security of our nation's borders in this age of terrorism and effectively preserve the basic civil liberties and due process embodied in our Constitution.

The comprehensive reform of the immigration system is too important to be a political football. Our leaders should ensure that policies are: humane, realistic and

practical; address economic and security concerns; and provide a timely, clear pathway for the undocumented, as appropriate, to participate in our society and to eventually obtain full citizenship.

## ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

For many reasons — economic, foreign policy and climatic — our nation must focus on reformulating its energy policies. We applaud efforts of the Administration dedicated to fostering an economically and environmentally sustainable energy future for our country. A combination of sound public policy and the innovative capacity of the market is needed to push our economy, and the world's, towards low carbon energy alternatives. Robust public-private collaboration will prove crucial to finding solutions to the threat posed by a rapidly changing climate.

We commend UJA-Federation and American Jewish Committee for “Going Green” and urge other Jewish organizations to follow. Renewable and alternative energy technologies are fundamental elements in the efforts to increase America’s energy security and address the long-term challenge of global climate change. Some of the most interesting energy-related innovations capitalize on Israel’s leadership in developing renewable and alternative energy sources. Joint cooperative ventures between American and Israeli businesses should be encouraged. JCRC-NY supports policies that encourage sustainability, greenhouse emission reduction, the effective management of the strategic petroleum reserve, energy diversification and alternative fuel sources.

## JUSTICE FOR HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

Leading advocates for Holocaust survivors have warned Congressional leaders that proposed legislation to permit lawsuits against European insurance companies for Holocaust-era insurance policies will “raise false expectations” and “jeopardize ongoing negotiations” for survivor benefits.

If enacted, the legislation would open the door to litigation against European insurers — including those that have reached agreements and settlements over

unpaid Holocaust-era insurance claims. The legislation would violate commitments made by the United States to European governments and insurance companies, which participated in the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC) in order to research and make payments on pre-World War II insurance policies owned by Holocaust victims and their heirs. More than \$300 million in payments were made through this process to nearly 50,000 claimants who, until ICHEIC, had received no payments on their families’ insurance policies in the decades following the war.

Claims Conference Chair Julius Berman observed, “Contrary to the intentions of its sponsors in Congress, such legislation will not help Holocaust survivors but may actually jeopardize ongoing negotiations for payments and assistance to them.”

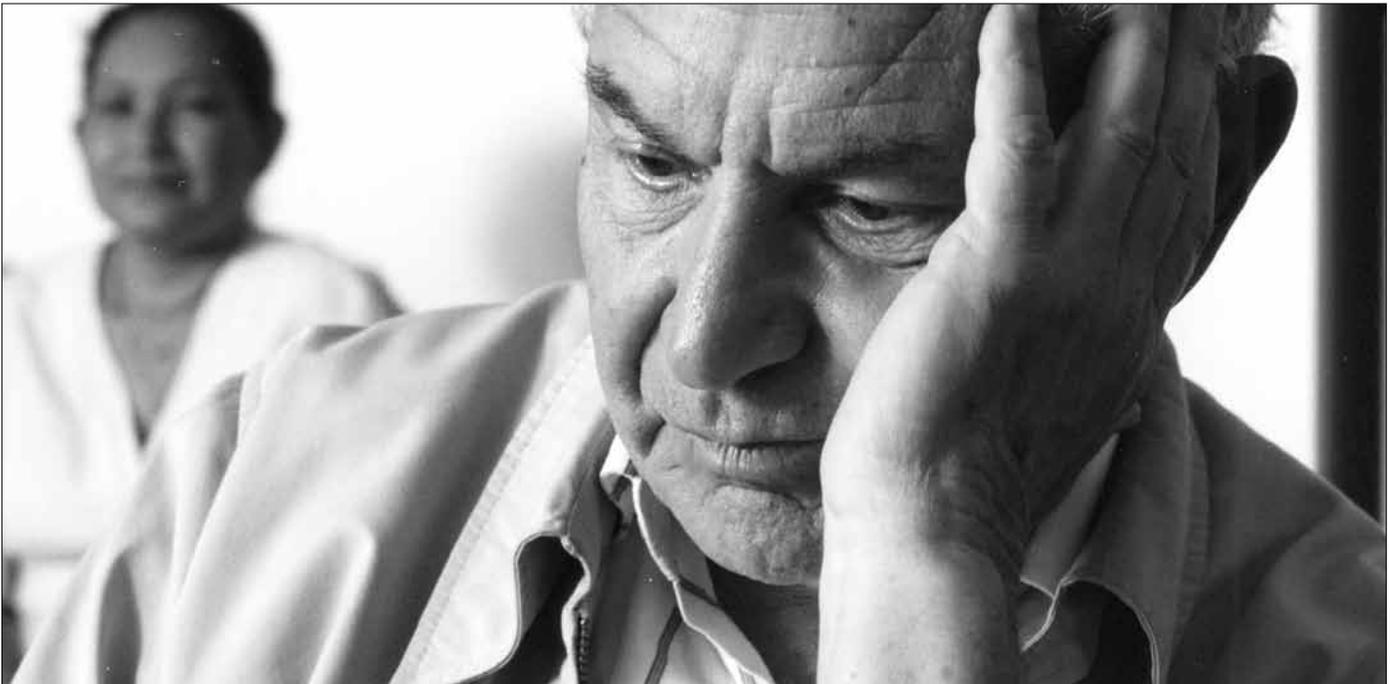
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## THE NONPROFIT SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM IS A PROVEN TOOL IN THE FIGHT TO HARDEN SOFT TARGETS AGAINST ATTACKS BY TERRORISTS.

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Only two months ago, the Claims Conference reached an agreement with the German government to provide over \$550 million in funding for the homecare needs of needy Holocaust survivors worldwide. “Such negotiations are predicated on prior, good-faith agreements. For the sake of survivors everywhere who will increasingly need this assistance, we cannot jeopardize future negotiations with this legislation. The legislation’s results are dubious at best, but through negotiations we have obtained substantial, real funding and payments for Holocaust victims,” said Mr. Berman.

These views have also been shared by the Obama, Bush and Clinton Administrations, which have consistently opposed similar versions of this legislation offered in previous sessions of Congress. We understand the frustration of many survivors who have been denied justice for so many years and the motivations of the sponsors who wish to right a historic wrong. However, this legislation is likely to lead to lengthy and costly litigation rather than achieving an additional measure of justice.



At UJA-Federation of New York, our caring hand provides access to crucial human services to all New Yorkers, whoever they are. We mobilize the Jewish community to become a source of care that embraces the poor, the elderly, children and adults with special needs, and the unemployed across the economic spectrum.

## RESPONDING TO THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

The current state of economic turmoil roiling our nation continues to provide formidable challenges for the Jewish social service system as well as the broader non-profit sector in which we participate. The profound need for social services from those who have lost their jobs, homes, health care and food security has expanded dramatically over the past few years. This great surge in need for safety net services has coincided with a sharp reduction in government and philanthropic funding streams.

The debt limit legislation passed last summer imposed caps on discretionary programs that has already reduced their funding by \$9 billion and will result in further cuts of almost \$1 trillion over the next decade. In addition, the failure of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to reach its mandate to reduce deficits by another \$1.2 trillion means that the “sequestration” procedure will now trigger across-the-board cuts, scheduled to occur beginning in January 2013.

Our social service network has been stretched thin by the massive influx of needy families and individuals in economic crises, a situation confronted by faith, charitable and public

institutions across the country. We anticipate several years more of greatly increased need for supportive services. UJA-Federation has reached into its endowment to provide in excess of \$10 million to fund services and assistance to those impacted by the economic crisis we are enduring. We intend to continue to work with our coalition partners in the Jewish community and beyond to advocate for the most prudent cuts possible, while maintaining the service programs integral to the vulnerable populations we serve.

While we are mindful of the difficult budgetary choices that must be made at all levels of government, UJA-Federation believes that it is the responsibility of the federal government to ensure that state and local governments are able to appropriately provide for their residents. We believe very strongly that the most vulnerable in our society must be protected as all Americans are called upon to share in a time of sacrifice.

## PROTECTING MEDICAID AND THE HEALTH CARE SAFETY NET

We believe it is essential that Congress improve the quality and delivery of Medicaid and Medicare,

while ensuring these programs remain fiscally and programmatically sound. UJA-Federation supports enhanced access to health care for the uninsured, and stresses that New York State, with our relatively high costs and vexing challenges, not bear an excessive financial burden in doing so. The current economic climate and demographic changes demand that our government and health care institutions redesign our health care system; however, greater efficiencies cannot be achieved at the expense of our health care safety net.

Fully half the funding supporting UJA-Federation's human service network is derived from Medicaid funds; as a consequence the health and vigor of our agencies' programming depend significantly upon the program.

It is critical that Medicaid and Medicare reflect greater innovation in health delivery methods. We support the programs' rebalancing to promote more home and community-based services and hail important initiatives such as the State Balancing Incentives Payment Program (BIPP), a four year initiative that will provide states with a two or a five percent increase in their federal match for Medicaid Home and Community-Based Service costs.

## ALLEVIATING POVERTY

UJA-Federation believes it is critical that this nation continue to serve the poor and near poor during these difficult times. Far too many Americans cannot subsist without the government's safety net during these challenging days. We

## THE PROFOUND NEED FOR SOCIAL SERVICES FROM THOSE WHO HAVE LOST THEIR JOBS, HOMES, HEALTH CARE AND FOOD SECURITY HAS EXPANDED DRAMATICALLY OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS.

continue our work with all levels of government to ensure that New York's social service network has the resources necessary to meet the needs of the most vulnerable at times of economic hardship.

Community services must be sustained to provide safety net assistance. We are disappointed that funding for vital programs such as the Community Development Block Grant, the Community Services Block Grant and the Social Services Block Grant was decreased or level funded in this year's appropriations process, rather than supplemented to meet these challenges.

Each of these block grant programs has been subject to dramatic funding reductions over the past decade. These cuts have coincided with a time when the number and percentage of Americans living in poverty have increased for seven consecutive years. The unsettling trend of dismantling public services across the country is a dangerous one that is exacerbating the effects of the recession and disrupting the lives of countless Americans. Such reductions in financial resources have eroded significantly the ability of UJA-Federation agencies and other nonprofits to appropriately serve individuals and families seeking their assistance.

## EMERGENCY FOOD AND SHELTER PROGRAM

Over the past three years, our nation has experienced a 33 percent growth in the number of children who are living in homeless shelters, motels, on the street, or with other families. This means that in the US today, one in 45 children is homeless. Today, across the country, food pantries are continuing to see unprecedented demand for help from individuals and families.

Child poverty is estimated to cost the United States over \$500 billion each year, as homeless and hungry kids are more prone to have health problems, to be less likely to succeed in school and work, and more likely to end up in the criminal justice system.

Since its inception in 1983, the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) has been a major unemployment and poverty safety-net for millions of Americans at risk of food insecurity and homelessness as they become economically vulnerable. EFSP supplements services provided by nearly 13,000 public and nonprofit agencies across the country.

In FY2009 and FY2010, Congress increased the EFSP annual allocation to \$200 million in step with the economic downturn. Despite the prolonged effects, in FY2011, Congress abruptly reversed course and cut the EFSP allocation by an unprecedented 40 percent

## HUMAN SERVICES

(\$80 million). The cut has been felt in every community across the nation as local EFSP boards make decisions about how to absorb the cuts across the public and non-profit recipient agencies that are struggling to meet extensive needs. It appears that for FY 2012 this vital program will not receive additional funding.

### AGING AND LONG TERM CARE

It is our strong belief that the rapidly growing older adult population is best served by aging policies that align with the trends toward aging in place. We strongly support the development and appropriate funding of programs that promote community based health and human services that assist older Americans to maintain their independence and quality of life as they age.

UJA-Federation supports programs and policies that are effective in permitting older adults to improve their quality of life and preserve their dignity, such as the reauthorization of the *Older Americans Act* and the vital programs it funds, the Community Innovation for Aging in Place program, and enhanced access to quality transportation and affordable housing.

### TRANSPORTATION FOR SENIORS AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

UJA-Federation strongly supports the *Senior Transportation and Mobility Improvement Act* that would improve transportation options for seniors and persons with disabilities. The bill has a number of important provisions which would help bring about a much better transportation system for seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Transportation provides the basis of a multitude of services that are available to seniors aging in place; without it, seniors cannot get to doctor's appointments, social programming and other essential services and activities. It is estimated that there currently exists \$1 billion per year in unmet transportation needs for older adults.

### NEED FOR ELDER JUSTICE

Millions of seniors are harmed and impoverished by elder abuse in the United States. Elder abuse is estimated to have an annual cost in the tens of billions

of dollars, often unnecessarily borne by Medicaid and Medicare due to preventable injury and illness.

The NYS Office of Children and Family Services released an elder abuse prevalence study earlier this year which revealed that in New York State there are approximately 270,000 older adults who reported having been victims of abuse — but that the actual prevalence rate is nearly 24 times greater than the number of referred cases.

The plight of these victims has not been a priority on the national or state agendas. The passage of the *Elder Justice Act* two years ago was an important recognition of the need for a coordinated federal response to elder abuse — however, no funds have yet been appropriated for any part of the Act. In addition, elder justice provisions of the *Older American Act* have not been funded or implemented.

This year's reauthorization of the *Violence Against Women Act* (VAWA) provides a special opportunity to review and enhance our resources to fight against this scourge in our society. Grant programs funded by VAWA currently authorize \$4 million each year for elder justice – we urge our members of Congress to work towards strengthening this funding stream to reflect the severity of the issue.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

We were gratified that in January, the President signed into law legislation which was intended to strengthen Section 202 and Section 811 programs by making several important and well-received improvements. Unfortunately, the programs' efficacy has been diminished by this year's budget process which has resulted in much lower levels of funding than that sought by the Administration and a small diminution even from last year.

Our frail elderly population is in particularly great need of housing assistance. The Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly program provides direct loans to nonprofits for the development of critically needed supportive housing for the elderly and has been clearly recognized as one of our government's most successful housing programs. Its funding and viability must be preserved.

The Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities program provides funding to nonprofits to develop rental housing with the availability of supportive services for very low-income adults with disabilities and provides rent subsidies for the projects. Until the recent reforms, the law was outdated in terms of disability housing policy and appropriations had declined from more than \$350 million in the mid-1990s to recent levels of approximately \$240 million.

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## **AUTISM IS CONSIDERED THE FASTEST GROWING DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDER IN THE UNITED STATES, OCCURRING IN AS MANY AS ONE IN EVERY 110 BIRTHS, AND ONE OUT OF 70 BOYS.**

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Adequate funding for these programs will ensure that new housing serves as a platform to access key services required to age in place and for persons with disabilities to live independently in mainstream, integrated settings.

We are also greatly concerned that despite the burgeoning need for Section 8 housing vouchers, only one quarter of eligible households receive Section 8 due to funding constraints. Congress must support efforts to devise a rational plan to implement regulatory and legislative changes in the Section 8 program that restores the program's credibility and stability with the intent of paving the way for future growth.

### **MAXIMIZING INCENTIVES FOR CHARITABLE GIVING AND NONPROFIT INTERESTS**

UJA-Federation urges Congress to adopt new charitable tax incentives that maximize philanthropic giving and believes expenditures in this arena are one more step that will help grow the economy out of the recession. We favor: making permanent the current IRA charitable rollover; allowing unlimited gifts to qualified charities including donor advised funds; increasing or eliminating the adjusted gross income limitation on gifts to qualified charities; extending the carryover period for charitable deductions; and

providing an above-the-line deduction for charitable gifts for individuals who do not itemize.

We endorse efforts to support the interests and mission of nonprofits and are opposed to restrictions on the definition of what constitutes a charity, burdensome new tax requirements, and impediments to nonprofit governance, operations and fundraising.

### **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

*Workforce Investment Act* (WIA) programs need to be revitalized to permit our institutions of higher education and workforce system to better prepare for the challenges of this economic climate. In recent years WIA programs have been the target of declining resources and a lack of coherent strategy which has resulted in a workforce system that is woefully underfunded and ill prepared for the challenges of our global economy. Education is the ultimate form of economic development — funding must be allocated to develop and sustain a skilled workforce.

### **SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AND/OR MENTAL ILLNESS**

UJA-Federation supports full funding of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, affordable and accessible supportive housing units, other home and community based services, respite care and job training for individuals with disabilities.

### **FULLY FUND COMBATING AUTISM ACT PROGRAMS**

Autism is considered the fastest growing developmental disorder in the United States, occurring in as many as one in every 110 births, and one out of 70 boys. However, despite the increasingly high prevalence of this disorder, autism research remains one of the lowest funded areas of medical research in both the public and private sector.

While significant progress has been made in recent years to increase the funding for autism research at the federal level, much more must be done to confront the challenges endured by an overwhelming

number of American families. Experts agree that early intervention is important in addressing the symptoms associated with autism and can have dramatic effects in improving individual outcomes.

Congress recognized autism as a national public health priority with the enactment of the *Combating Autism Act* in 2006, legislation that enabled the autism community to make tremendous research strides. Last year, the 2011 *Combating Autism Reauthorization Act* was introduced and it would significantly increase both the depth and breadth of the federal response to autism spectrum disorders. However, to realize the benefits of this program, we must appropriately fund its activities, including critical programs at the National Institutes of Health, the Centers for Disease Control, the Health Resources and Services Administration and other federal agencies.

### HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Health information technology is a critical component of health reform. New York State has been a leader in the movement to create an electronic system enabling providers to adopt and utilize electronic health records. We believe that widespread use of electronic systems is an important way in which government resources can be more efficiently utilized saving the Medicaid and Medicare programs millions of dollars annually.

UJA-Federation and our agencies have been strong partners in these state efforts to use information technology to improve health care delivery and outcomes. We believe that prudent adoption of Health Information Technology — using electronic health records to record and track health care data and services provided to a consenting patient — and efficiently sharing of data with other medical providers serving that same patient through health information exchanges will: increase health care quality, reduce medical errors, promote care and coordination, result in fewer duplicative tests and lower costs throughout the system.

The passage of the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* provided \$20 billion in incentives and grants to health care providers and hospitals to establish interoperable electronic health record systems through the nation. These benefits are extended to most health professionals and to most hospitals. However, the mental health sector of the health care community was ineligible for this critical funding.

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## **THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES DEMAND THAT OUR GOVERNMENT AND HEALTH CARE INSTITUTIONS REDESIGN OUR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM, HOWEVER GREATER EFFICIENCIES CANNOT BE ACHIEVED AT THE EXPENSE OF OUR HEALTH CARE SAFETY NET.**

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We are very supportive of legislation such as the *Behavioral Health Information Technology Act of 2011* that would extend the incentives for the “meaningful use” of electronic health records by ensuring the eligibility of most behavioral and mental health professionals and their facilities.

Delivering health technology to mental and behavioral providers bridges the care for patients with mental and physical illnesses. UJA-Federation believes that community-based mental hygiene, home care and long term care programs must also be able to access these incentives. These programs have a specialized focus and serve patients and clients who are high-cost drivers in the system and who transition between various care settings as their needs change. We are concerned that these nascent efforts to develop health information technology systems and networks without including this population will result in a flawed network faced with lower health care outcomes and greater costs.

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