



Muslim Jewish Advisory Council Meets Members of Congress, Discusses Hate Crimes

February 1, 2017 — Washington, D.C. — The **Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council** held its second meeting today in Washington, D.C. Stanley Bergman, CEO of Henry Schein, and Farooq Kathwari, President and CEO of Ethan Allen, are the co-chairs of the Council. Its 36 members are recognized business, political, and religious leaders in the American Jewish and American Muslim communities. They jointly advocate for solutions to U.S. domestic policy issues of common concern.

The Council launched on November 3, ahead of Election Day, though its members had been involved in many conversations over a period of months. Their shared vision is reflected in the Council Declaration. “America promises all its citizens equal rights and equal protection under the laws. We have come together to help deliver on that promise for our communities and all Americans, and to participate in building our country pursuant to its laws and ethical traditions. Our country is unique in being a democracy based not on religious or ethnic homogeneity but on equality of all citizens regardless of ethnicity or religion. We affirm our sacred commitment to that principle,” states the Council Declaration. The full text is available at the Council website www.muslimjewishadvocacy.org.

Before the MJAC meeting, Council members visited Capitol Hill in the morning to meet with Democratic and Republican members of the House and Senate to raise awareness about the Council, its members and mission, and to urge lawmakers to work to strengthen the country’s response to the increase in hate crimes across the U.S., especially those targeting Muslim and Jewish communities and institutions.

Council members resolved to work with states and local governments to assess efforts to improve hate crimes reporting and to achieve full implementation of existing hate crimes legislation, as well as to explore initiatives to establish firmer, consistent laws regarding hate crimes.

The Council elaborated on its concerns about hate crimes in an “open letter” to Congress, also found on the Council’s website, in which it encouraged Representatives and Senators to ensure that the new Administration sustains the Justice Department’s coordination with the states not only in the area of prosecutions, but also in the areas of public education and community relations.

The Council also discussed several immigration issues, in particular the Executive Order banning travelers from certain countries and prioritizing religious minorities for refugee resettlement. “We share the deep concerns with the President’s Executive Order of January 27 on refugee policy expressed by many members of Congress, both Republicans and Democrats. We oppose any ban on refugee or other immigration to the United States based on religion,” stated the Council in its open letter to Congress. The day of MJAC advocacy in Washington ended with a bipartisan Capitol Hill reception co-hosted by Senators Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Ben Cardin (D-Maryland).