

# **Agudath Israel Washington Mission: Delegates Prepare to Meet Government and Elected Officials**

March 13, 2019



“One person can make a difference!” This theme, the ability of the very few to make things better for so many others, was the rallying cry of last night’s orientation for Agudah’s annual Washington Mission. The two day lobbying event began on Tuesday afternoon and will include numerous meetings with elected officials and others in the high government positions who work closely with the Agudah’s leadership and regional directors throughout the year. Representing Jewish communities from coast to coast, more than 50 delegates from ten states traveled to Washington D.C. to discuss matters of concern affecting Orthodox Jews with top federal officials during Agudath Israel of America’s Washington Mission.



Agudath Israel of America Washington Mission 2019



Agudath Israel of America Washington Mission 2019





Agudath Israel of America Washington Mission 2019



Agudath Israel of America Washington Mission 2019



Agudath Israel of America Washington Mission 2019





Agudath Israel of America Washington Mission 2019



Agudath Israel of America Washington Mission 2019



Agudath Israel of America Washington Mission 2019



Agudath Israel of America Washington Mission 2019





Agudath Israel of America Washington Mission 2019



Agudath Israel of America Washington Mission 2019





Agudath Israel of America Washington Mission 2019



Agudath Israel of America Washington Mission 2019



Agudah board of trustees chairman Shlomo Werdiger and Agudah's National Director of State Relations A.D. Motzen welcomed mission delegates, emphasizing the importance of lay people working with officials to create positive results and to uphold the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of religion.

Carving time out of his extremely tight schedule in order to address the mission, prominent litigator Nathan Lewin shared his observations on how dedicated advocates who are engaged in the legislative process can become effective catalysts for change, particularly today when the Supreme Court appears to be more favorably disposed towards religious groups than in the past. Mr. Lewin spoke about religious rights cases that he has argued in his own half-century long career and discussed the major role his father played in the 1957 federal kosher slaughter legislation that remains on the books today. The Polish-born Mr. Lewin, whose family fled from the Germans in the early days of World War II when he was a small child, also warned about waves of anti-Semitism that have become disturbingly prevalent, noting that they may be the harbinger of a more serious situation in the future.

The final speaker of the night was Agudah vice president for government affairs and Washington director and counsel Rabbi Abba Cohen, who



coordinated the mission in conjunction with Agudah executive director Rabbi Labish Becker, Rabbi Motzen and Agudah events coordinator Mrs. Debby Jacobs. Rabbi Cohen, who has become a respected figure in the halls of government during his 30 year career in Washington, gave a brief overview of some of the many issues that are being supported by the Agudah in the 116th Congress, including Israel, security grants, schools choice, combating BDS, and tax issues affecting nonprofits. The vast scope of issues that affect the Jewish community are so far reaching that Rabbi Cohen noted that even with another ten employees on his staff, he still would not be able to fully cover them all.

Dividing themselves up into groups by state, delegates spent the rest of the evening preparing for their upcoming meetings and presentations during their whirlwind trip to the nation's capital.

"Having had the privilege of cultivating positive working relationships at the local, federal and state levels, we have seen time and time again the importance of having our voices heard and our faces seen," said Rabbi Motzen. "We are truly blessed to be living in a democracy that allows us to live our lives as Orthodox Jews and to have lawmakers and other high ranking officials who appreciate the importance of religious freedoms. We look forward to continuing to advocate for our community at all levels of government