

# **Congress Takes Giant Step Forward in Securing Shuls, Yeshivas, Charities and Other U.S. Nonprofits**

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The U.S. Congress's passage of \$180 million for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) is being hailed by Agudath Israel of America, one of the program's crafters and leading supporters, as a landmark achievement. NSGP provides up to \$100,000 worth of assistance to nonprofits at high risk of terrorist attack for the purchase of security enhancements such as cameras, concrete barriers, reinforced doors, and personnel. The increase was part of the FY 2021 appropriations package.

The new appropriation doubled the current levels for NSGP and will be split down the middle — \$90 million for pre-designated Urban Area Security Initiative areas and \$90 million directed to other areas of high terrorist risk.

"Congress's action will provide much needed and more effective protection for vulnerable community institutions, and for safeguarding the lives of the many thousands of men, women, and children they serve," noted Rabbi Abba Cohen, Agudath Israel's Vice President for Government Affairs and Washington Director. "We are grateful that Congress recognized that, in light of the escalating violence targeting nonprofits, including houses of worship, we needed a response that is even more comprehensive in both scope and depth to meet the growing and worsening threat of terror."

Indeed, the significant NSGP funding boost comes partly in the wake of tragedies confronted by the Jewish community. Synagogues, schools, and charities continue to reel from the anti-Semitic murders in Pittsburgh,

Poway, Monsey, and Jersey City, and from the uptick of anti-Semitic incidents nationwide. According to the most recent FBI Hate Crimes Statistics Report, in 2019, anti-Semitic hate crimes increased 14 percent and constituted over 60 percent of all religion-based hate crimes, and this is likely an underestimate.

Agudath Israel and other organizations, under the coordination of the Jewish Federations of North America, fought hard to create and maintain the NSGP program. National and local advocacy groups, working together, brought the program to where it is today.

“For the Jewish community, the threat of terrorism is distinct and tangible and we live within its shadow every day. We have a strong stake in this program and continue to vigorously support Congress’s efforts to strengthen it,” concluded Rabbi Cohen. “The increase will translate into protecting more lives in more institutions in more parts of our country.”

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