



AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA **FEDERAL AGENDA 2016**

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AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA
FEDERAL AGENDA
 2016



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**AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA'S
 OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS**

Agudath Israel of America is a 93-year-old national Orthodox Jewish organization, headquartered in New York, with a Washington Office and affiliated chapters across the United States. Agudath Israel sponsors numerous projects and programs that service the community in a wide variety of settings. Through its Office of Government Affairs, Agudath Israel advocates before federal, state and local bodies on behalf of Orthodox Jews and their growing network of educational, religious and charitable institutions.



For the Orthodox Jewish community, education – and particularly Jewish education – is an issue about which we are most passionate. Indeed, we firmly believe that it is the connection to our past and the hope for our future. It is the essential key to Jewish continuity.

In line with this sense of priority, our federal agenda focuses heavily on education-related issues.

Agudath Israel is commemorating the 55th year since its late president, Rabbi Moshe Sherer, delivered his groundbreaking testimony to Congress on federal funding for the religious school community. His argument then still rings true today.

“Parents should not be unduly penalized for practicing the exercise of their free choice, implicit in the American way of life, to educate their children in accordance with their religious conscience.”

This principle of “equitable participation” later played a key role in the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1964 and subsequent reauthorizations, including the recently-passed Every Student Succeeds Act.

For over 60 years, Agudath Israel has served as a liaison between government and the entire spectrum of Orthodox Jewish educational institutions in the United States: the more than 800 hundred pre-K, elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools that educate more than 300,000 students across the country. More specifically, our work in the nation’s capital has included advocacy of behalf of the network of elementary and secondary schools that come under the umbrella of the National Society for Hebrew Day Schools and the institutions of higher education affiliated with the Association of Advanced Rabbinical and Talmudic Schools. Agudath Israel is also a member of the Council for American Private Education.

Because these schools have experienced rapid growth over the decades, and because our people have long attached the highest priority to education, Agudath Israel has taken a considerable interest – and has been a leader – in the formulation and implementation of education law and policy. We have been deeply engaged in the national discussion on educational reform and have worked closely with presidents and congressional leaders to seek ways to enhance American education – both public and nonpublic. From the original 1964 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) until today, there has virtually been no major federal education bill in which Agudath Israel has not been actively involved.



Rabbi Moshe Sherer receiving award from President Lyndon B. Johnson for his efforts on behalf of the ESEA



The New York Times.
 THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, MARCH 30, 1961.

Excerpts From Testimony at Hearing on School Aid

Special to The New York Times.
 WASHINGTON, March 29—Following are excerpts from testimony before a House Education and Labor subcommittee today by Rabbi Morris Sherer, executive vice president of Agudath Israel of America, and Leo Pfeffer, general counsel of the American Jewish Congress.

By Rabbi Sherer

I have the privilege to represent Agudath Israel of America, a national organization of Orthodox Jews with local membership chapters in communities throughout every part of the United States. Our organization was founded thirty-nine years ago, and our membership includes thousands of rabbis and communal leaders, amongst them the foremost Jewish scholars and religious authorities in this country.

We strongly favor Federal aid to parochial schools. We deplore that an incorrect image has been foisted upon the American public of the Jewish position on this issue, and that, as a result, a false impression has arisen of the Jewish posture towards religious education.

Classical Judaism has, from the very inception of the Jewish people, placed religious education in sharp focus as the centrality of life itself. This awareness about the primary role of religious education is a fundamental principle in traditional Jewish law. Thus, for example, the Talmud forbids one to reside in a community which lacks educational facilities for the children.

In order to place the primacy of education to the Jew in its proper perspective, one need but leaf through the history of our people, which is one long glorious record of enormous personal sacrifice by parents in order to provide a maximum religious education for their offspring. Our history books are replete with thousands of examples of the Jew's readiness to sacrifice of his very self in order to provide a traditional education for his children. Under the most trying circumstances, in areas when the Jew was the victim of pogrom, pillage and persecution, he allowed no obstacle to stand in the path of educating the young. In our own times, even in Nazi ghettos, underground methods were devised whereby the knowledge of their faith could be transmitted to the few surviving children.

Misconception Is Seen

I mention these facts in order to clear up the misconception which is prevalent amongst the American public, stemming from statements by certain secularist Jewish leaders and Reform clergy. In our own beloved country, American citizens of the Orthodox Jewish faith have built a network of 251 elementary and secondary parochial schools, under extremely

Judaism, who are those most vitally concerned, through personal commitment, to the issue of Federal aid to parochial schools.

And, I may add, the memorandum distributed yesterday, to Congress by the Administration's attorney against Federal aid to parochial schools, conversely tends to prove that there is no clear-cut "black and white" thinking on this issue of constitutionality. The brief is so full of loopholes, and draws so many distinctions between legal and illegal aid, that it actually serves to add weight to our contention that die-hard opposition to Federal aid to the secular programs of parochial schools is filled with inconsistencies.

By Mr. Pfeffer

I should like to present my statement on this issue in the form of a consideration of what I believe are five fallacies that have arisen regarding the inclusion or exclusion of parochial schools from a program of federal aid to education.

FALLACY 1. The inclusion of parochial schools in a program of Federal aid to education does not infringe upon the constitutional requirement of separation of church and state.

The struggle for religious liberty and the separation of church and state in America is largely a history of the struggle against compulsory taxation for religious purposes.

It is of great significance that in the Bill of Rights which was finally adopted, the very first right named is the right to enjoy the separation of church and state.

Although there are fifty state constitutions and fifty state legislatures, each completely independent of the others, in every one of them without exception it is unlawful to grant tax-raised funds for the support of church or parochial schools.

It is this universal and long-standing tradition and policy that is being seriously challenged for the first time by the demands for Federal aid to parochial schools. And it is for that reason that I am convinced that this demand constitutes the most serious assault upon the wall of separation between church and state in the history of our nation.

FALLACY 2. The exclusion of parochial schools from a program of Federal aid to public schools infringes upon religious liberty.

It is one thing to say that religious liberty forbids the Government from closing down church schools, as the Oregon Legislature sought to do in the Pierce case. It is something entirely different to say that religious liberty also requires the Government to finance these schools.

Court View Called Clear

It is important to note that religious liberty was not the issue considered in the

parochial schools from a program of Federal aid constitutes discrimination against Catholic parents and children.

There was a time in American history when the demand by Catholics for equality and nondiscrimination was valid. In many states, particularly east of the Mississippi, the earliest public schools were little more than continuations of existing Protestant church schools. When the general community took over these schools their Protestant bias and their Protestant practices often continued.

All this, however, is past history. Today the public school welcomes the Catholic child as a full and equal companion of all children.

Where, then, is the discrimination? Would it not be more accurate to suggest that here, too, the converse is more accurate? Public schools are supported by all taxpayers regardless of race or religion and are open to all children regardless of race or religion. But church schools are open only to children of the faith that maintains the schools. Does it not constitute discrimination to tax a Protestant parent to support a child may not enter, or to Catholic school which his tax a Catholic parent to support a Jewish school which is closed to his child? Is not this truly discrimination?

FALLACY 4. Exclusion of parochial schools from a program of Federal aid results in double taxation.

This is a fallacy because it ignores the basic premise of America's educational system: That it is the whole community which is benefited when children are educated and that the whole community is concerned not only with the fact of children's education but also with the type of education the children shall receive.

Absence of Control

The cost of public education is borne by all citizens because all citizens govern and control it. If the citizens of a community are dissatisfied with the way their schools are operated it is within their power to vote in a new school board whose policies will more closely reflect the community's will. No such power exists in respect to private or parochial schools.

FALLACY 5. Loans of Federal funds to parochial schools stand on a different footing from direct grants.

It would seem far wiser for Americans happily to accept and indeed vigorously to defend the principle of separation of church and state than to seek to evade it by devious means.

The fatal weakness of the loan proposal is that it seeks to accomplish exactly what the Constitution seeks to prevent—government aid of religion.

The demand for Federal loans is not motivated by an inability to obtain loans in the open market from commercial sources. It is motivated by a desire to obtain tax-raised funds some way or another.

It need hardly be pointed out that if the Government can get 4 per cent for its money by lending it out on the open market and lends it to the parochial schools for 1 per cent, it is making a gift of money to the schools, and if the amounts loaned run into the hundreds of millions of dollars, it is quite clear that the gift is a very substantial one.

reference, the organization of the country's Catholic bishops.

The bill contains a clause designed to assure a Supreme Court test of its constitutionality. It specifies that a school applying for a loan would be to satisfy the United States Commissioner of Education that the loan would not violate the First Amendment's mandate of separation of church and state. The school would then be entitled to court review of an adverse decision.

The bill also contains a provision prohibiting loans to schools that practice racial discrimination in entrance requirements.

Jewish Leaders Differ

Disagreement between Orthodox and secular groups among American Jews over aid to parochial schools was pointed up in testimony today by Rabbi Morris Sherer and Leo Pfeffer, both of New York.

Rabbi Sherer, executive vice president of Agudath Israel of America, strongly supported the Catholic case for Federal help. He presented what he called the prevailing sentiment of Orthodox Jews, who open 251 elementary and secondary

Agudath Israel was one of the key organizations that pioneered the federal guarantee of "equitable participation" – the fundamental principle that ensures that nonpublic school students, as well as their parents and teachers, be on equal footing with their public school counterparts with respect to government benefit programs. However, all-too-often this principle, in practice, has not lived up to its promise. For this reason, during the recently passed **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**, which reauthorized ESEA funding programs, Agudath Israel supported appropriate legislation designed to broaden the scope of federal assistance bound by the principle of equity and also helped craft provisions that will enhance equity by requiring greater state and local accountability, transparency and flexibility in these programs.

While we are pleased that many of these important provisions were included in the legislation and have become the law of the land, we also recognize that our work is far from done. The focus now turns to the all-important implementation phase and we fully recognize that frequently legislative gains are lost at the administrative level. As a key stakeholder, Agudath Israel has been invited by the U.S. Department of Education to provide input during the rule-making process. We look forward to continue working with our congressional allies to better ensure that the agency's regulations reflect the full measure of what nonpublic schools achieved, and are entitled to, as a result of ESSA passage.

One particular area where the equitable participation of nonpublic school students has been sorely deficient is in special education programs. Despite the assurance of equity in the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**, judicial and administrative bodies have ruled that, unlike their public school counterparts, nonpublic school children do not enjoy an "individual entitlement" to the broad range of federal special education services that may be required to meet their needs. Consequently, state and local authorities have been able to seriously curtail the number and scope of such services provided to the disabled in our schools. As we plan for the next reauthorization of IDEA, Agudath Israel will urge that the failure to meet this basic obligation toward our students be fully addressed and that the equity provisions of that law be clarified and strengthened.



Rabbi Abba Cohen with Education Secretary Arne Duncan



EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

On both the national and state levels, Agudath Israel has been a prominent and powerful voice in the school choice movement. We believe that one of the keys to educational excellence is parental involvement and that there is no better way to encourage such involvement, and to ensure educational accountability, than to allow parents to choose the school that is best suited for their children, whether public or nonpublic, secular or sectarian. As such, it makes good policy sense. Moreover, Agudath Israel has for decades been in the forefront of the long fought legal battle over school choice. We are proud to be among those advocates who have argued successfully in the U.S. Supreme Court and other fora in favor of the constitutionality of school choice programs, where the aid flows directly to parents who may then freely exercise their educational options.



Celebrating National School Choice Week with House Republican Policy Chair Rep. Luke Messer (IN-6)

Agudath Israel has, therefore, supported various forms of school choice, including vouchers, tax credits and education savings accounts. The flurry of recent federal proposals – the **Scholarship for Kids Act**, the **CHOICE Act**, the **Enhancing Educational Opportunities for All Children Act**, the **Expanding School Choice Act**, and the **Title I Portability Provisions** – are welcome developments. The introduction of these bills is significant, as it wasn't so long ago that school choice legislation was a nonstarter. And it is indicative of school choice's growing popularity and acceptance as an effective tool for educational reform.

As an original and continuing supporter of the **D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program (DCOSP)**, we were deeply disappointed by Congress' failure in the final weeks of 2015 to reauthorize that program. The DCOSP stood out as the first and only education-related voucher program on the federal level. It is a successful program that has the strong backing of the D.C. political leadership and of the city's parents. And, despite fierce opposition from the White House and powerful teachers' unions, Congress has consistently passed the program each year. Agudath Israel and the school choice community are confident that this is a simple and temporary setback and we will work hard to put DCOSP back on Congress' agenda.



EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

In addition, Agudath Israel has endorsed parental choice in early education settings. Twenty five years ago, our organization was among a small group of faith-based advocates that helped create and promote the introduction of certificates in what is now termed the **Child Care Development Fund (CCDF)**. The significance of certificates cannot be overstated as they alone – as opposed to grants and contracts – make possible the participation of religious child care providers and programs and the ability of eligible parents to access them if they so wish. In recent years, however, many believe that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has been sending unmistakable messages that emphasize the utilization of grants and contracts at the expense of certificates. In response to these concerns, Agudath Israel has submitted written presentations to HHS showing that it was Congress' intent to stress the pre-eminence of certificates, and their preferred availability, as they provide the optimal mechanism for parental choice. During the recent reauthorization, Agudath Israel helped craft, and strongly supported, legislative and report language further enshrining this principle into law. As HHS will be writing regulations, we will remain vigilant that they be true to Congress' intent.

Finally, when a federal **Universal Pre-K program** was proposed, Agudath Israel immediately reached out to the White House and congressional sponsors to call upon them to make religious providers and programs available to eligible parents. Using the child care program as a successful model, we stressed the need to set up a system that would utilize certificates in order to allow families to opt for religious providers within constitutional parameters.



EDUCATIONAL AUTONOMY

Another of Agudath Israel's broad areas of educational concern relates to the importance of fostering educational diversity and maintaining the independence and autonomy of Jewish and other nonpublic schools. Excessive governmental regulation, with or without attendant support, can destroy the very character of religiously-affiliated schools. Such institutions must be permitted to maintain policies **consistent with their religious faith**.

An increasingly common scenario relates to the autonomy of religious schools within the context of **anti-discrimination laws**. Religious schools must be allowed to adhere to employment policies – particularly in this age of changing social mores – that are intended to maintain an educational environment best suited to promote the religious principles for which they exist. For example, efforts in recent years to enhance the marriage rights of same-sex couples might present difficult challenges for faith-based schools that find recognition of such relationships religiously objectionable. Moreover, religious schools should never be forced to violate their religious beliefs. This issue has become the source of great controversy, as many religious employers are being forced under the Affordable Care Act to provide coverage for items they deem to violate their religious beliefs. In all such cases, Agudath Israel believes that religious entities, particularly religious schools, should enjoy strong **religious exemptions** and the full measure of protection afforded by the **First Amendment** and the **Religious Freedom Restoration Act**.

Another example of Agudath Israel's fight for educational independence is in the area of **school curricula and assessment standards**. The autonomy of nonpublic schools is threatened, and the cause of diversity is harmed, when government imposes one uniform set of curricular requirements or other educational requirements they deem religiously objectionable.



HIGHER EDUCATION

In contrast to K-12, federal student aid on the higher education level is predicated on the premise that college students should have the ability to choose the programs that work best for them, with religiously-affiliated institutions playing a prominent role in providing high quality education to post-secondary students across the gamut of fields and degrees.

The nationwide network of rabbinical and talmudic schools – post-secondary institutions known as “yeshivas” – have an important place in the diverse landscape of higher education and are venues of choice for Orthodox Jewish men seeking undergraduate and graduate degrees. Agudath Israel advocates on behalf of these students and the institutions that serve them. And, as Title IV student assistance programs – particularly Pell Grants and Campus-Based Aid – are important to ensure that yeshiva students can afford their education, we take a keen interest in advocating for the continued vitality of these programs.

For this reason, Agudath Israel looks to be actively engaged in the upcoming reauthorization of the **Higher Education Act**, in concert with leaders in the yeshiva sector who, for the past two years as the committees have geared up for reauthorization, have been laying the groundwork by offering comments and suggestions, and by meeting with congressional leaders and staff.

A top reauthorization priority relates to changes in the Pell Grant program. The laudable push towards simplification of the student aid application process has come along with suggestions to impose a hard income limit on Pell Grants. But with large families (8+ members) being the norm in our community, we must ensure that family size continues to be a factor in eligibility determinations, rather than an across-the-board limit.

Moreover, we support restoring the “Ability to Benefit” option for students without high school diplomas, so they will not be permanently shut out of federal student aid. We are also advocating for flexibility with the Pell Grant limit, so that students close to graduation are not closed out by running out of grants.

Another major concern of ours in reauthorization relates to the intense focus on evaluating institutions based on their student outcomes and graduation rates – a methodology that is deficient in numerous ways. Because 5-year-degree schools, which include yeshivas and other institutions, are forced to report on the basis of criteria pegged to traditional 4-year schools, federal graduation rates do not accurately capture the outcomes on nearly half of the students entering college in a given year.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, “transfer out” students who successfully complete at a second school should be counted in the original institution's graduation rate. The typical model for yeshiva students is that they start at one yeshiva, take a break to study abroad, and complete at another yeshiva. The tremendous successes of these transfer students are lost and unreportable in the current IPEDS system – thereby providing public officials with inaccurate and incomplete data on higher education outcomes in yeshivas and other like sectors. The reauthorization must address this issue.



CHILD NUTRITION

Jewish schools, like many in the nonpublic school community, participate widely in the programs included in the Child Nutrition cluster administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Child Nutrition cluster includes the: School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, Special Milk Program for Children and Summer Food Service Program. Because Jewish schools must adhere to kosher dietary laws that sometimes might conflict with program requirements, Agudath Israel has successfully advocated in specific cases to the USDA for appropriate “religious accommodations.” Moreover, during reauthorization of the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) we worked with congressional leaders to set up a framework that would make kosher food more available and accessible to pantries and soup kitchens that cater to the Jewish needy. As Congress reviews the USDA Child Nutrition programs, we will work to enshrine in law these principles.



SECURITY GRANTS

It is no secret that Jewish schools (and other communal institutions) are targets for violence by foreign and domestic extremists. Indeed, threats have been made and incidents have occurred. In many schools there are regular drills and lock-downs. These alerts have escalated in the face of the rising anti-Semitic tide. Agudath Israel has worked hard to increase federal and state funding to protect our schools and our teachers and children. We are grateful that Congress recently boosted the appropriation for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program to \$20 million, but that is still far too short of what is needed, and raising that figure will be a priority for us in the months ahead. Agudath Israel has also been in touch with the White House and congressional leaders with the goal of proposing new school safety measures and reauthorizing expiring ones. Our message is that there must be a focus on securing America’s schools and that any such plan must include religious and other nonpublic schools.



FAITH-BASED PARTNERSHIPS

We must work to ensure that our law and public policy puts religious institutions on the same footing as similarly situated secular entities when it is constitutionally permitted to do so. We were an original supporter of the Faith-based and Community Partnerships Initiative, which was intended to level the playing field for religious groups in regard to eligibility and receipt of funding for federal programs. Previously, it was not uncommon for these groups to be disqualified from participation based upon First Amendment concerns that the Supreme Court had already rejected. Indeed, such an attitude not only deprived our communities of the assistance a faith-based partnership could have provided but also evinced a hostility toward religion disfavored by our law. Our government must continue to find ways to embrace religious groups and their vital role in our society.

DISASTER RELIEF

Under the Stafford Act, some private nonprofit entities are, under certain conditions, entitled to receive federal disaster relief to repair and restore facilities damaged by hurricane, earthquakes, tornados and the like. Included in the list of eligible recipients are religious schools — as long as they are not “primarily religious.” This confusing and difficult-to-determine standard has too often led federal and state FEMA officials to summarily dismiss claims from religious schools. It is also unfair, as religious schools — primarily religious or not — sustained the same indiscriminate damage as other entities and should be entitled to the same relief. Agudath Israel has worked hard over the past two decades to remove impediments to the receipt of federal disaster funds by religious schools and to put them on equal footing with secular entities. We support legislation that would remove this unwarranted — and perhaps unconstitutional — distinction and allow this relief to flow to all religious entities, including religious schools and houses of worship.



SUPPORTING CHARITIES

As budget cuts will have a profound effect on many social programs, and those that benefit from them, charitable institutions will be asked to step up and seek to address some of society’s most pressing needs – the young and the elderly, housing, employment, health care, etc. But they often lack the resources to do so. It is therefore vital that congress support a strong “charitable deduction” and other tax provisions and proposals that will encourage giving to our non-profits and charities.



- Advocating for employees who require **reasonable accommodations for religious observance**, such as taking time off for the Sabbath and holidays. Problems in this regard continue to face religiously-observant employees and current law needs to be strengthened through enactment of the proposed Workplace Religious Freedom Act. One area that we also plan to explore and strengthen will be the federal religious compensatory time law.
- **Protecting the rights of religious entities to maintain hiring policies that are in accord with their religious beliefs and mission.** This is particularly relevant in regard to programs that come within the Faith-based and Community Partnerships Initiative, as well as various other proposals – such as the Employment Non-Discrimination Act and recent Executive Orders on federal contracting and on the administration of federal programs – whose hiring provisions may conflict with a religious organization’s religious character.
- **Opposing any health care reform proposal that would force a religious entity or individual to violate their religious beliefs.** Some religious groups have objected to the contraception mandate on these grounds. In the Orthodox Jewish community this problem is perhaps most relevant to “end-of-life” issues, where Jewish law prescribes strict guidelines as to whether or not life sustaining treatment is required.
- **Blocking any attempt to weaken the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA)**, which has become the primary source of religious protection in the U.S. Unhappy with the high level of protection RFRA affords religious entities and individuals, some have attempted to carve out certain classes of people and activities from the scope of its protection. But religious freedom should not, per se, be sacrificed in favor of other interests; doing so would have a devastating effect on America’s First Freedom.



Meeting of the the Council of Torah Sages, which serves as Agudath Israel of America's highest rabbinic body



- Advocating for a **Middle East peace** agreement, including a resolution of the Palestinian issue, that is based on the right of Israel to live safely within secure borders. This will come as long as United States clearly demonstrates its **ironclad support and commitment to Israel** – both morally and materially – thus persuading the Arab nations that they have no choice but to come to the negotiating table. Any perceived weakening of this bond will only embolden rejectionists. We will also encourage the United States to enhance its strategic and security relationship with Israel.
- **Combatting the scourge of terrorism** in Israel and around the world and making clear that acts of violence against innocents will not achieve the aims of Islamic extremists bent on the destruction of Israel and free societies. This includes the continued non-recognition of Hamas and severe consequences for a Palestinian Authority or any country that in any way abets or condones terror. It is absolutely unacceptable that Israeli citizens should have to suffer missile attacks and daily episodes of bloodshed.



American funded Iron Dome missile defense battery

- **Preventing a nuclear Iran**, which poses grave danger to the United States and the West and a mortal threat to Israel and to countries in the region. The pact concluded this year with Iran contains serious flaws that not only fail to address this problem but will more likely exacerbate it. The damage done by the agreement can be minimized, however, by American insistence upon tangible and verifiable progress by Iran in fulfilling its commitments, a zero tolerance policy when Iran does not comply with its obligations, and a readiness on the part of the U.S. to abandon the pact or impose additional and harsher sanctions when Iran fails to act in good faith.
- Urging the United States, the beacon of the free world, to condemn and do all in its power to **combat the open and ugly manifestation of anti-Semitism** – expressed in both words and violent deeds – at home and abroad. Calls to “Gas the Jews” and other such venomous expressions of hate cross the line of legitimate political discourse and expose the motives and intentions of those who make such statements. Applying a double standard when evaluating the actions of Israel and Jews, whether it is seen at the U.N. or in the pronouncements of the “boycott, divestment and sanctions” movement, must be roundly condemned.



AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA

AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA is a 93-year-old national organization which represents Orthodox Jewish communities throughout the United States. Agudath Israel advocates on behalf of Jewish schools, social service and health care needs, religious liberty and an array of other pertinent issues. It also sponsors numerous programs that service the broader Jewish community.

In 2012, Agudath Israel sponsored the Siyum HaShas which brought together 90,000 Jews to MetLife stadium while an additional 50,000 tuned in via broadcast in 120 locations worldwide.

The Siyum Hashas celebrates the completion of a 7.5 year, worldwide, Talmud study program.

The **OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS** and its staff of attorneys works to safeguard religious and civil rights of observant Jews through a variety of channels including a full-time Agudath Israel Washington Office.

- 10 State Offices
- Active government advocacy in more than 20 states
- Representation in 34 States

The **EDUCATION AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT** at Agudath Israel of America advocates on behalf of Orthodox Jewish schools. Through a series of workshops, seminars and newsletters, the division helps Jewish schools navigate the maze of applicable laws, regulations and governments sponsored programs. The organization serves as a liaison between the schools and the local, state and federal governments.

- Represents the interest of more than 700 elementary and secondary schools under the umbrella of the National Society for Hebrew Day Schools
- Advocates on behalf of nearly 250,000 students nationwide.,
- Arranges workshops relating to government regulations that pertain to nonpublic schools, as well as government programs for which they are eligible to apply
- Responds to numerous daily calls from principals and administrators, answering questions on a wide range of issues.

PROJECT LEARN, the special education division of Agudath Israel of America, advocates on behalf of children with special needs and assists parents who are dealing with the full range of the special education needs of their children. Project LEARN is also involved in special education legislation, activism, and advocacy.

Agudath Israel's **LEGAL SUPPORT SERVICES LLC** is a network of lawyers who volunteer their time and skills to assist with individual cases that meet the organization's criteria. These include custody battles between spouses of different levels of religious observance, immigration related problems, Sabbath and holiday observance issues, and zoning issues which affect Jewish institutions.

The **CONSTITUENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT** assisted 6,000 callers last year with a myriad of social services issues.

Agudath Israel of America's **COMMISSION ON SENIOR CITIZENS**

- Sponsors three senior citizens centers in the New York area.
- Offers 1000 elderly senior citizens free, kosher hot lunches and a wide range of social services.



COPE AND PROFESSIONAL CAREER SERVICES (PCS), with offices in both New York and New Jersey, provide training, job readiness and career placement for young men and women

- The New York office served more than 350 people
- More than 85% of COPE graduates find jobs in their field
- Junior Accounting Program: 115 students enrolled in 2014; approximately 2000 total since inception
- CPA Track Program: more than 60 students enrolled in 2014, with over 500 in total since inception

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY SERVICES provides assistance to hundreds of immigrants every year by offering English language courses, preparing participants for employment

SOUTHERN BROOKLYN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION is committed to helping low and moderate-income residents obtain and maintain affordable housing. It also provides a broad spectrum of housing services to strengthen the viability and quality of life in Brooklyn neighborhoods.

- Serves 300 clients annually.



PIRCHEI AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA is a national youth group program of Agudath Israel of America.

- 20,000 participants ranging from Pre-K – 8th grade.
- 10,000 children in New York State
- 115 branches nationwide

BNOS AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA is an afterschool youth program for Orthodox Jewish girls.

- Youth groups in 38 cities
- 125 branches
- 100 advisors
- 200 branch leaders
- 1,000 leaders
- 20,000 participants
- 5000 members in New York State
- 300 Bnos 1 on 1 pairs

Agudath Israel's **CAMP DIVISION** provides a beneficial summer experience for thousands of children.

- 4 campuses in New York State which service 7 camps and 2500 campers
- 5 campuses in the Midwest which service 9 camps and 2700 campers



Camp Agudah, Ferndale, NY



AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA TWELFTH SIYUM HASHAS



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