



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

After wave of threats against JCCs, IDC announces Religious Freedom Package

JEFFREY D. KLEIN March 2, 2017

| ISSUE: **ANTI-HATE, HATE CRIME, PUBLIC PROTECTION, VANDALISM**

Legislative measures crackdown on hate against all religious groups

Albany, NY — After four bomb threats were lodged against Jewish Community Centers in New York, members of the **Independent Democratic Conference** announced their Religious Freedom Package, legislative measures to promote tolerance and combat hate-inspired actions across the state.

The threats in New York are part of an anti-Semitic wave of incidents occurring nationally this year, which include threats to JCCs and Jewish cemetery desecration in 33 other states. Hate-fueled crimes against other religious groups have also been on the rise this year.

“This is a country built on the principles of freedom and tolerance, where individuals are welcome to worship freely. As the grandson of Holocaust survivors, to see this occur in America in 2017 is deeply disturbing and we must send a clear message to anyone who believes that they could strike fear into any religious group: hate will not be tolerated in New York State,” **said IDC Leader Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester)**.

The Religious Freedom Package includes legislation to:

- **Create a specified offense for graffiti making as a hate crime** - Currently graffiti is a class A misdemeanor, but S.4777 sponsored by **Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland)** would elevate this offense by one degree to a class E felony, if graffiti is made to target a person's race, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, religion, religious practice, age, disability or sexual orientation.
- **Increase penalties for bias-related graffiti and graffiti on religious property** - When vandalism occurs at a house of worship, a chilling effect occurs. This legislation, S.1785, sponsored by Senator Klein adds a penalty of a class E felony and aggravated harassment for this offense. It also allows the courts to order vandals to clean up their graffiti. This overwhelmingly passed in the Senate this year.
- **Prohibit discrimination against religious attire** - This legislation, S.1503, sponsored by **Senator Tony Avella (D-Queens)** protects wearing any attire, clothing or growing facial hair in accordance with the requirements of a person's religion.
- **Heighten penalties for damaging property in a house of worship or desecrating a cemetery** - Criminal penalties are elevated by a degree for damaging property or stealing property in a house of worship and desecrating or raiding valuables from a cemetery, under Senator Klein's S.1786.
- **Prohibit funding to college groups that participate in boycotts of Israel and other countries that have a Regents chartered school** - State aid would be prohibited from funding any academic entity or activities if engaged in a boycott of Israel or other countries.

“Threats and acts of hate directed at New Yorkers based on their religious beliefs cannot be condoned. This new legislation increases penalties for those who choose to perpetrate crimes against citizens who only wish to practice their religion in peace,” **said IDC Deputy Leader David Valesky (D-Syracuse).**

“Hate crimes were up 31% in 2016 compared to the previous year and there has to be a deterrent to reduce an ugly trend. We will not tolerate those kinds of displays in this community and will come together to fight back against hate and discrimination. The state must remain vigilant in deterring such conduct and have zero tolerance for such offenses, including graffiti that targets a person because of their identity,” **said Senator Carlucci (D-Rockland/Westchester).**

“Any religious based violence, discrimination, or hatred is a violation of our most basic human rights. This recent wave of anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic action runs contrary to the values and ideals of our state and our country. This Religious Freedom Package of legislation should not be necessary in the United States of America. However, I am proud to stand with the IDC in putting these protections into law and fighting everyday for the marginalized and threatened of this state,” **said Senator Avella (D-Queens).**

“I am proud to represent one of the most culturally diverse populations in the entire State. Unfortunately, we have seen an uptick across this country of crimes geared toward instilling fear in communities of people who make this city and state great. Vandalism, destruction of property, and threats of violence against an individual based on their heritage is one of the most reprehensible acts one can carry out,” **said Senator Diane Savino (D-SI/Brooklyn).**

“President Donald Trump's hostile rhetoric aimed at our immigrant and Muslim communities is dangerous and has serious consequences, as the recent spike in hate crimes has shown. All New Yorkers and all Americans must reject the division and hatred such actions represent, and this legislative package sends a clear message that hate crimes against any nationality or religion are never welcome in this state. In this current climate, we must stand up and speak out against every injustice we see,” **said Senator Marisol Alcantara (D-Manhattan).**

“In our society, there should be zero tolerance for violence. Perpetrating a crime is bad, but doing it in the name of hate is simply deplorable. Fighting hate-inspired crime is a priority, especially now, as we are experiencing a spike in discriminatory violence. We are at the forefront of efforts to promote tolerance and I am glad we are introducing the Religious Freedom Package to tackle senseless acts of hate,” **said Senator Jose Peralta (D-Queens)**.

“These measures are an important part of expressing our solidarity with our Jewish and Muslim friends and neighbors, and anyone facing harassment, intimidation, or hate crimes. We will rise to the challenge of upholding our religious freedoms, even in the face of those who seek to marginalize and intimidate. This Religious Freedom Package serves to unite our efforts and ensure our culture of religious inclusion prevails,” **said Senator Jesse Hamilton (D-Brooklyn)**.

RELATED LEGISLATION

2017-S4777

- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly

- On Floor Calendar Senate

- ◦ Passed Assembly

- Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

-

Makes graffiti a hate crime

February 28, 2017

In Senate Committee [Codes](#)

Sponsored by [David Carlucci](#)

Do you support this bill?

2017-S1785

- Introduced

- ◦ In Committee Assembly

- In Committee Senate

- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly

- On Floor Calendar Senate

- ○ Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Increases the penalties for bias-related and gang related graffiti, and graffiti upon religious property

January 10, 2017

In Senate Committee [Codes](#)

Sponsored by [Jeffrey D. Klein](#)

Do you support this bill?

2017-S1503

- Introduced
- ○ In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- ○ On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ◦ Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Prohibits discrimination against religious attire

January 10, 2017

In Senate Committee [Investigations and Government Operations](#)

Sponsored by [Tony Avella](#)

Do you support this bill?

2017-S1786

- Introduced
- ◦ In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ○ Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Enhances criminal penalties for criminal mischief and larceny offenses committed at a place of religious worship

January 10, 2017

In Senate Committee [Codes](#)

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Do you support this bill?