



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Elaine Phillips

## Senator Phillips' Bill To Ensure New York's Students Are Being Taught About the Holocaust Passed by Senate

ELAINE PHILLIPS June 15, 2017

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Senator Elaine Phillips (R-Manhasset) announced that the Senate passed legislation she sponsored to ensure that New York State's students are being taught about the history of the Holocaust. The legislation was introduced in response to numerous anti-Semitic threats and acts, as well as an upstate high school's "critical thinking" assignment where students were told to provide their "Nazi point of view" and justify the mass murder of millions of innocent people as part of the "Final Solution."

"Learning from the past helps change the future for the better. The Holocaust is one of the worst atrocities in human history; it can never be forgotten or allowed to happen again. Teaching students about it in a responsible manner will reinforce the importance of preventing genocide and condemning hate and anti-Semitism," said Senator Phillips.

Senator Phillips' legislation (S5530) would require the State Education Commissioner to review school districts' compliance with existing state law that requires them to offer age-appropriate instruction on the Holocaust. The Commissioner's findings would then be detailed in a report to the State Legislature and the Governor. Additionally, the Commissioner would be authorized to develop any regulations necessary to ensure school

districts are complying with the law and providing such instruction.

Over the last several months, there have been an alarming number of threats and hate crimes targeting people of the Jewish faith, including bomb threats against Jewish Community Centers on Long Island and across the country.

Additionally, media reports detailed an assignment given by a teacher from an upstate school that asked students to pretend to be Nazi officials attending the Wannsee Conference, where the “Final Solution” was created. Half the class was assigned to write a memo advocating for the extermination of the Jews, while the other half were to write against it, limiting their arguments to those of Nazi leaders who opposed it. Despite some students raising moral objections, the teacher and the school did not apologize or promise that the “critical thinking” assignment would not be given again until the State Education Commissioner intervened.

The legislation has been sent to the Assembly.