

ACTION ON THE STATE LEVEL

The California State Capitol is one of the lively arenas of organized Jewish activity, revealing the variety of issues which concern the Jewish community.

Last week our legislators passed a strong proclamation hailing Israel on its 35th birthday. They are the formal political spokesmen of this state, and their forthright statements are significant. When they do have the opportunity to act directly on this front, they do -- as when they passed a law prohibiting the implementation of the Arab boycott against Israel within California. That paved the way for a federal law.

Our state legislators also passed an appropriate proclamation marking the Holocaust, a useful statement these days; and listened to an Israeli survivor, Sheva Weiss, who was brought to this area by the San Francisco Jewish community.

These kinds of efforts are coordinated by the Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California (JPAC), comprising the nine organized Jewish communities of the state. But JPAC is more regularly occupied with addressing specific state legislation of concern to the Jews.

This year, for example, the San Francisco component of JPAC, mainly through the Legislative Committee of the JCRC, has already expressed itself on bills related to civil rights, the aging and public schools.

The JCRC is supporting Senate Bill 188, which would establish a central clearing house in the state for addressing all incidents of violence related to religious or racial bigotry. The JCRC is also supporting AB 1, which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation; AB 398, which prohibits age discrimination in public employment; and SJR 9, introduced by Senator Marks, which memorializes the federal

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government to provide compensation for Japanese-Americans incarcerated during World War II.

The JCRC is supporting the principle of AB 780, which makes threats to synagogues and churches a felony -- although suggesting changes that would make the law workable. Unless, for example, that law is made a "wobbler," that is, allows a judge to treat the offense as either a misdemeanor or a felony depending on the circumstances -- experience shows that judges will just throw some cases out of court without any penalty at all. There are two bills -- AB 98, which would prevent the dissemination of bigoted material on school grounds, and AB 239, which would penalize discrimination by private clubs -- whose substance the Legislative Committee is also trying to improve.

The Jewish community's concern with the aged, and the specific concern of local Jewish social agencies, are reflected in the consideration of a number of proposed bills. There is Jewish support for SB 134, which would continue funding for Adult Day Health Care centers, such as the one at Mt. Zion; SB 26, which promotes housing for the aged; AB 1210, which further addresses physical abuse of the aged; AB 1855, introduced by Filante, which would require adequate notice for the closing of long-term health facilities.

And there is close study of the various public schools proposals, one of the hottest issues in Sacramento.

If you want to know more about any of the above-mentioned bills, so that you can take your own action; or if you want some regular information about state legislation of concern to the Jews, just let the JCRC know.