



**JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL**  
of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin, Sonoma, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties

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### JCRC Launches “BANJO” Network for Jewish Elected Officials

San Francisco, CA – The Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin, Sonoma, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties (JCRC Bay Area) is excited to announce today the formal launch of the Bay Area Network of Jewish Officials (BANJO). This partnership between JCRC and Jewish elected officials from across the San Francisco Bay Area will support members strengthen relationships, develop and share best practices and policy priorities, and lead with a common Jewish voice. Though now launching formally, BANJO has been active since last year by hosting meetings to discuss antisemitic incidents in our communities and schools.

“When we gathered elected officials to discuss future partnerships, we found there was a need for Jewish officials to have a space to network, build skills, and speak out given the current environment, and that JCRC would be the perfect convener to do so. Leading up to today’s announcement, JCRC Bay Area held regional meetings in the North Bay, East Bay, and Peninsula,” Tye Gregory, JCRC Bay Area CEO, said. “BANJO members have also spoken at our four JCRC #HEREIAM county press conferences to date, and, just last week, more than 40 members attended the first-ever BANJO Conference in San Francisco.”

As of its official launch date, BANJO already includes more than 50 Jewish elected officials from across the nine counties of the Bay Area. Moving forward, JCRC will host regular networking and professional development gatherings, deepen Jewish elected engagement in Bay Area government, education, and civic spaces, and serve as a trusted resource for members.

Three regional chairs have been also selected: Belmont Mayor Julia Mates (Peninsula), San Rafael Vice Mayor Rachel Kertz (North Bay), and El Cerrito City Council Member Tessa Rudnick (East Bay).

“I am grateful to JCRC for creating this support system to help address the unique issues facing Jewish elected officials. BANJO is already building bridges and elevating issues of importance to the Jewish community in meaningful ways. I hope and expect that having this network will increase and encourage Jewish community activism and participation in civic life for years to come,” Mayor Julia Mates of Belmont said.

“As someone who grew up being the only Jewish kid in my class, it was hard being the sole voice of the Jewish community. Or at times not wanting to share that I was Jewish. Although as a city councilmember my experience is different, there are times that I still need to be that voice. BANJO and JCRC provide a

support network that hasn't previously existed," Rachel Kertz, vice mayor, San Rafael, said. "As a member of BANJO we share experiences as well as challenges, discuss local, state and federal policies impacting the Jewish community and most importantly we celebrate our Jewish background."

"As JCRC saw rising antisemitism, we knew we needed a community-wide response. JCRC also recognizes that elected Jewish officials face unique challenges in public life – from simple misunderstandings about Jewish identity to outright discrimination. This new network for Jewish elected officials, BANJO, allows us to exchange ideas, strengthen relationships, share best practices, and speak with a common voice on issues of mutual concern," Tessa Rudnick, city council member, El Cerrito, said.

JCRC Bay Area is the largest collective voice of Bay Area Jews. By building bridges and working in coalition with diverse ethnic, faith, political, and civic communities, JCRC is pursuing social justice based on Jewish values and strengthening the pillars that our society needs to thrive.

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