



AJFCA Welcomes Vice President Biden's Announcement to Support Aging Holocaust Survivors

White House Initiatives Would Help Ensure Holocaust Survivors Live with Dignity, Comfort and Security

The Association of Jewish Family & Children's agencies (AJFCA) welcomed Vice President Joe Biden's announcement at the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's (JDC) Centennial luncheon to launch an initiative together with the Jewish community to address the needs of Holocaust survivors living in poverty in the United States. This announcement follows years of conversations between the White House, Members of Congress, and Jewish Family and Children's Service agencies and Federations to address the social service needs of Holocaust survivors through fundraising and legislative efforts such as the RUSH Act.

Vice President Biden announced that the White House would take concrete steps to help address the need.

- Appoint a Special Envoy at the Department of Health and Human Services to act as a liaison for Holocaust survivors and the nonprofit community organizations that serve them. The Special Envoy will support programs that help Holocaust survivors live with comfort and security and will help educate the public and private sectors on the needs of Holocaust survivors.
- Create a partnership with the AmeriCorps VISTA program to dedicate volunteers to increase the capacity of community organizations to serve impoverished Holocaust survivors. The volunteers would engage in capacity building activities such as fundraising and outreach for Jewish family and children's service agencies.
- Explore public private partnerships to address funding shortfalls so that community organizations can continue to serve Holocaust survivors.

Throughout his remarks, the Vice President praised the work of Jewish community organizations in serving Holocaust survivors and in helping them access nutrition and other services to live with dignity and comfort in their homes and communities.

Vice President Biden said that most Holocaust survivors he has known--such as the late Tom Lantos who was his staff member and later became Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee--were not poor. He was surprised to learn that approximately 25 percent of Holocaust survivors in the United States were living below the federal poverty line, and about half of the survivors in New York were in poverty. Holocaust survivors in South Florida brought this issue to Vice President Biden's attention and he and the President decided to act.

AJFCA is continuously dedicated to working with Congress, the White House and nonprofit organizations to ensure that Holocaust survivors get the support and care they need to live in their communities with comfort and security. We will continue to update you as the initiative develops, and we will rely on you for information and insight. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. If you have questions, please contact [Lee Sherman](#) or [Shelley Rood](#).

Excerpt from Vice President Biden's remarks:

"The Jewish community has been leading this for decades. And the President and I have decided it's time for us to step up and build on your efforts. So I'm announcing today we're about to appoint a special envoy to the Department of Health and Human Services charged with the mission to reach out across federal agencies to help find the kind of support that nonprofits need to effectively deliver services like home care, transportation, meal delivery and other services to these survivors living in poverty. (Applause.)

This will make the government more responsive to a Hungarian survivor in the Bronx who needs a wheelchair or the elderly woman with memories of Warsaw ghetto who needs a ride to the doctor. We're also going to secondly, create a new partnership through AmeriCorps to bring together volunteers with community-based organizational skills that support local Nazi victims living in isolation and poverty. AmeriCorps and VISTA members are going to be working at a national level, and local levels, to help plan and execute these programs, recruit and manage volunteers, and help with resource development efforts.

And, thirdly, recognizing the Jewish community's collective commitment to helping these vulnerable populations, we're also looking to new public-private partnership opportunities with foundations, nonprofits and private sectors to increase the resources available to support these survivors and their unmet needs, because I still think by working together we can increase the overall resources available.

And, finally, there's a role for diplomacy to help resolve claims for property taken from survivors as part of the prosecution. Many of you have worked a considerable part of your life to do this. Some countries have found meaningful and expedient ways to resolve these issues, which can be complex and difficult. But others have not. We will continue to work very closely with you and with the World Jewish Restitution Organizations and through our diplomatic efforts to urge others in Central and Eastern Europe to step up. I recently had a conversation in Ukraine about this very subject. So that's what we're doing for the survivors among us. And there's more to be done."