

A RESOLUTION

Designating the month of May 2024, as “Jewish American Heritage Month” in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the United States have served as havens of religious tolerance for communities of all faiths; and

WHEREAS, The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania takes great pride in the varied religious and cultural traditions of residents of this State and seeks to afford all people in Pennsylvania the opportunity to better understand, recognize, and appreciate the rich histories, cultures, and shared principles of Jewish Americans; and

WHEREAS, The histories of Jewish Americans and that of both the United States and Pennsylvania are interwoven; and

WHEREAS, Escaping persecution, Jewish immigrants established the first documented Jewish communal settlement in North America in 1654;¹ and

WHEREAS, Since then, Jewish individuals have made innumerable contributions to American history, culture, military, science, and government;² and

WHEREAS, From 1820 through 1924, millions of Jewish immigrants arrived on United States shores from Europe;³ and

WHEREAS, One such immigrant, Irving Berlin composed “God Bless America,” which many consider the unofficial national anthem of our nation;⁴ and

¹ (Library of Congress, n.d.)

² (National Archives, 2023)

³ (Library of Congress, n.d.)

⁴ (McCollum, 2019)

WHEREAS, Jewish American poet Emma Lazarus wrote the poem that adorns the Statue of Liberty, "The New Colossus," in 1883;⁵ and

WHEREAS, Countless Jewish Americans have bravely served in the United States military in every American conflict since the nation's founding⁶, including 500,000 during World War II alone;⁷ and

WHEREAS, Jewish American businessman Adolphus Simeon Solomons along with Clara Barton and others formed the American Red Cross in 1881;⁸ and

WHEREAS, In 1933, Albert Einstein, who was later recognized by *Time* magazine as the "Person of the Century,"⁹ left Nazi Germany and immigrated to the United States;¹⁰ and

WHEREAS, Lewis Charles Levin served as the first Jewish member of the United States Congress starting in 1845, followed by Jewish American firsts such as United States Secretary of Commerce and Labor Oscar Straus, United States Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, United States Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and many others;¹¹ and

WHEREAS, Nearly 8 million Jewish people live in the United States come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, including African American Muslims, immigrants, and native-born Americans, and represent approximately 2.4 percent of the country's population; and

⁵ (Jewish American Heritage Month, n.d.)

⁶ (Kratz, 2021)

⁷ (Jewish American Heritage Month, n.d.)

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ (Library of Congress, n.d.)

¹¹ (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, Jewish Political Milestones in the United States, 2024)

WHEREAS, Today, almost 300,000 Jewish adults call Pennsylvania home, comprising more than two percent of Pennsylvania’s population;¹² and

WHEREAS, Upon settling in Philadelphia in the 1700s, Jewish Americans have contributed to communities throughout our Commonwealth;¹³ and

WHEREAS, Lancaster resident Isaac Cohen was Pennsylvania’s first physician;¹⁴ and

WHEREAS, Jewish Americans such as former Pennsylvania American Civil Liberties Union Legal Director Stefan Presser and former Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth Executive Director Shelly Yanoff have advocated for civil liberties and health care for children;¹⁵ and

WHEREAS, Many Jewish Americans have served in Pennsylvania elected offices, including former Governor Ed Rendell,¹⁶ current Governor Josh Shapiro, and members of this very General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, Jewish Americans in both Pennsylvania and our country as a whole continue to dedicate themselves to public service despite persistent prejudice; and

WHEREAS, As the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has highlighted, “antisemitism has persisted in many forms for over two thousand years”;¹⁷ and

WHEREAS, Over 6 million Jewish people, a third of the world’s Jewish population were murdered during the Holocaust; and

¹² (Kallista, et al., 2021)

¹³ (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, Virtual Jewish World: Pennsylvania, United States, 2024)

¹⁴(American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, Virtual Jewish World: Pennsylvania, United States, 2024)

¹⁵ (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, Virtual Jewish World: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2024)

¹⁶ (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, Virtual Jewish World: Pennsylvania, United States, 2024)

¹⁷ (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.)

WHEREAS, Incidents of anti-Semitic violence and rhetoric are still prevalent in our Country and Commonwealth, and educational initiatives are critical to combatting bigotry; and

WHEREAS, It is appropriate to acknowledge and promote awareness of the myriad invaluable contributions of Jewish Americans in Pennsylvania and across the country, and extend to them the respect and camaraderie every American deserves; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives designate the month of May 2024, as "Jewish American Heritage Month" in Pennsylvania.

Bibliography:

American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise. (2024). *Jewish Political Milestones in the United States*. Retrieved February 12, 2024, from Jewish Virtual Library:
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-political-milestones-in-the-united-states>

American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise. (2024). *Virtual Jewish World: Pennsylvania, United States*. Retrieved February 12, 2024, from Jewish Virtual Library:
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/pennsylvania-jewish-history>

American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise. (2024). *Virtual Jewish World: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*. Retrieved February 12, 2024, from Jewish Virtual Library:
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/philadelphia-virtual-jewish-history-tour>

Jewish American Heritage Month. (n.d.). *Did You Know?* Retrieved February 12, 2024, from
<https://jewishamericanheritage.org/>

Kallista, D., Parmer, D., Tighe, E., Nussbaum, D., Magidin de Kramer, R., Seabrum, X., & Saxe, L. (2021, February). *Pennsylvania Report: An Analysis of the Jewish Electorate for the Jewish Electorate Institute by the American Jewish Population Project*. Retrieved February 9, 2024, from American Jewish Population Project: <https://ajpp.brandeis.edu/documents/2020/pajewishelectorate.pdf>

Kratz, J. (2021, May 18). *Men of Mordechai: Jewish Americans in the U.S. Armed Forces*. Retrieved February 9, 2024, from National Archives: <https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2021/05/18/men-of-mordechai-jewish-americans-in-the-u-s-armed-forces/>

Library of Congress. (n.d.). *From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America*. Retrieved February 9, 2024, from https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/haventohome/timeline/haven-timeline_0.html

McCollum, S. (2019, September 17). *God Bless America: The story behind the song*. Retrieved February 12, 2024, from The Kennedy Center: [https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/media/music/story-behind-the-song/the-story-behind-the-song/god-bless-america/#:~:text=Irving%20Berlin%20\(1888%E2%80%931989\)&text=He%20was%20born%2](https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/media/music/story-behind-the-song/the-story-behind-the-song/god-bless-america/#:~:text=Irving%20Berlin%20(1888%E2%80%931989)&text=He%20was%20born%2)

National Archives. (2023, May 11). *Jewish American Heritage Month*. Retrieved February 8, 2024, from <https://www.archives.gov/news/topics/jewish-american-heritage/#:~:text=NARA%20is%20proud%20to%20observe%20cas%20Jewish%20American%20Heritage%20Month.>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. (n.d.). *Antisemitism in History: From the Early Church to 1400*. Retrieved

February 13, 2024, from Holocaust Encyclopedia:
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/antisemitism-in-history-from-the-early-church-to-1400>

* * *

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 717-787-9516 or the Legislative Policy & Research Office at LPRO@pahouse.net.