

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 156 Session of
1989

INTRODUCED BY ITKIN, PIEVSKY, COHEN, FREEMAN, HAGARTY, JOSEPHS,
FOX, ROBINSON, BISHOP, RICHARDSON, PRESTON, DIETTERICK,
GIGLIOTTI, MARKOSEK, MELIO, HAYDEN, COLAFELLA, J. H. CLARK,
NAHILL, KOSINSKI, KUKOVICH, PRESSMANN, TRICH, DeLUCA, CESSAR,
TIGUE, WAMBACH, MORRIS, GEIST, RYBAK, VEON, PISTELLA, CLYMER,
E. Z. TAYLOR, BATTISTO, TRELLO, ANGSTADT, LEH AND CAWLEY,
JUNE 21, 1989

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON RULES, JUNE 21, 1989

A RESOLUTION

1 Memorializing Congress to pass legislation to increase the
2 number of Soviet Jewish refugees permitted to emigrate to the
3 United States, and to encourage the restoration of the United
4 States policy which granted automatic refugee status to
5 Soviet Jews.

6 WHEREAS, There are two million Jews in the Soviet Union; and

7 WHEREAS, These Soviet citizens have been the subject of
8 discrimination in employment and have been denied the freedom to
9 practice their religion; and

10 WHEREAS, Four hundred thousand of these Jews have risked the
11 stigma of social isolation by applying to emigrate; and

12 WHEREAS, The number of Soviet Jews permitted to emigrate in
13 1988 was almost 19,000, more than twice the number permitted in
14 1987 and the highest total in nine years; and

15 WHEREAS, The number which may be permitted to emigrate in
16 1989 may be as many as 40,000; and

17 WHEREAS, Many of these emigrants wish to settle in the United

1 States; and

2 WHEREAS, The United States government has set aside only
3 12,500 slots for Soviet Jewish refugees for the 1989 fiscal
4 year, and virtually all of these slots have been allocated; and

5 WHEREAS, An estimated 19,000 additional refugee slots for
6 Soviet Jews this year are required to accommodate the needs of
7 Soviet Jewish refugees; and

8 WHEREAS, There are approximately 7,000 Soviet Jews who have
9 successfully emigrated and who are languishing in refugee
10 centers in Italy and Austria awaiting entry into the United
11 States; and

12 WHEREAS, Until a change in United States policy in September
13 1988, Soviet Jews were automatically granted refugee status and
14 were thus eligible for travel, resettlement and medical
15 benefits; and

16 WHEREAS, Starting in September, the United States government
17 has revoked this policy and has considered granting refugee
18 status on a case-by-case basis, resulting in the denial of
19 refugee status to more than a third of Soviet Jewish emigrants;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, Those denied refugee status are offered parole
22 status, which permits the right to work but denies eligibility
23 for changing their status to that of a "permanent resident"
24 which is a precursor for "citizenship" status; and

25 WHEREAS, The Emergency Refugee Act of 1989 (H.R. 1605),
26 introduced on March 22, 1989, by Rep. Howard Berman (D-
27 California), would authorize the admission of up to 19,000 more
28 Soviet Jewish refugees and finance the cost of this policy by
29 borrowing \$100 million from the State Legalization Impact
30 Assistance Grant (SLIAG) program; and

1 WHEREAS, H.R. 1605 would also increase the number of refugees
2 admitted from other refugee communities; and

3 WHEREAS, H.R. 1605 has been endorsed by groups such as the
4 United Farm Workers, the National Council for La Raza and the
5 Council of Jewish Federations; therefore be it

6 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the
7 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania support human rights and the rights
8 of Soviet Jewry to emigrate to the United States, and that the
9 policy of the United States be changed to facilitate the
10 emigration of Soviet Jews and other persecuted minorities around
11 the world; and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the
13 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania memorialize its desire that the
14 Congress of the United States will expeditiously enact H.R. 1605
15 to increase the number of refugees permitted to enter the United
16 States; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That the Attorney General of the United States be
18 encouraged to restore the policy of granting automatic refugee
19 status to emigrating Soviet Jews.