

American Jewish History Month Passes House Unanimously

On December 15, 2005, the House of Representatives passed, by a vote of 423-0, a resolution sponsored by Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, urging President Bush to proclaim January as American Jewish History month. This historic legislation was introduced with the support of 250 original co-sponsors with broad bi-partisan support.

Many Americans have very little understanding of Judaism and Jewish culture simply because the majority of Americans have few interactions with Jews or Jewish traditions.

“For over 350 years, American culture has been deeply enriched by the contributions of Jews,” said Rep. Wasserman Schultz. “While only 2% of the population, Jews have played a vital role in every aspect of American culture, from the westward expansion, to advances in medicine and quintessentially American symbols as the song ‘God Bless America.’ “

Rep. Wasserman Schultz will be working with House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) as well as with the Washington representatives of organizations from across the country to urge President Bush to establish, by Executive Order, American Jewish History Month.

Services for you

My offices are pleased to provide you with a variety of services, from helping you cut through the red tape of the federal government to military academy nominations or arranging for flags to be flown over the Capitol.

Feel free to write, call or e-mail if you need assistance with any of the following:

- Congressional/Washington, DC Tours and Tickets.
- Flag requests: buy a flag flown over the U.S. Capitol.
- Grants: assistance with applying for federal and domestic grants.
- Housing: problems with housing vouchers, federal loan programs, HUD.
- Immigration: assistance with the naturalization process, etc.
- Internships: Come get experience in the legislative process.
- Passports: Emergency service, lost or stolen.
- Social Security: Eligibility or missing benefits.
- Military families: Support on benefits, deployments, etc.
- Veterans: Acquiring lost medals, benefits, VA home loans.

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News from U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz

Proudly representing Florida's 20th Congressional District

Dear Friends,

I wanted to make sure that you were aware of the issues I have been working on this past year in Washington, DC and here on the ground in Florida's 20th Congressional District.



Looking back on the year, the Congress has dealt with a variety of issues. Whether we were debating the future of Social Security and fighting for the independence of the judiciary, or introducing legislation to protect children from violent sexual predators, it has been a busy and productive year for Florida's 20th Congressional District.

I am also very proud that my colleagues joined me in adopting legislation that would prohibit life insurers from denying coverage solely because an individual might travel internationally.

I hope that you find this overview of the past year both informative and helpful. We've worked on several issues, from helping veterans with benefit issues, to helping seniors with Social Security questions, and even helping people get the most out of their family visits to our nation's capital.

As always, if you need help with an issue, or if you'd like to share your ideas and opinions, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

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Wasserman Schultz Holds Town Hall Meetings to Discuss New Medicare Rx Drug Plan

More than 400 people attended a Medicare Rx Drug Town Hall Meeting hosted by U.S. Rep. Wasserman Schultz in Davie on November 15, 2005. The meeting was organized to help local seniors understand the changes in the Medicare program and to learn about important facts prior to deciding whether to participate in the Medicare Rx plan. Experts from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Elders), and The Social Security Administration gave presentations and answered questions about the impact of the plan and its benefits and pitfalls.

A second Medicare Rx Town Hall Meeting was held on December 20th in Hallandale Beach.

U.S. Rep. Wasserman Schultz has previously expressed opposition to the law that created the new Medicare Rx program because the drug benefit is overly complex and inadequate. The Congresswoman believes the program was set up to maximize profits for the pharmaceutical and HMO companies rather than maximizing help to Medicare beneficiaries.

That said, people need to be armed with the information necessary to make the best decision on whether to join and – if so – which plan may best meet their needs.

The Future of Social Security: In Jeopardy?



Congresswoman Wasserman Schultz meets with constituents at a town hall meeting at the Lippman Center.

The year started off with President Bush proposing dramatic changes to Social Security, including a partial privatization of the plan.

Congresswoman Wasserman Schultz opposed the President's plan, and spoke out against it from the floor of the House of Representatives in Washington, at press conferences in Florida, and at a series of Town Hall Meetings in March.

The meetings in Sunrise, Hollywood, and Sunny Isles Beach drew hundreds of seniors and national media attention, with the CBS Evening News and New York's Newsday interviewing Debbie and many of the Town

Hall attendees to gauge public support for the proposed changes to Social Security.

After months of debate and multiple events opposing the proposed changes, the President dropped the plan.

U.S. Rep. Wasserman Schultz welcomes a real debate about the future of Social Security - one that includes both political parties from the beginning and does not seek to privatize what is arguably one of the most successful government programs ever to lift people out of poverty.

Wasserman Schultz Legislation Keeps Violent Sexual Predators Off Our Streets

In September, U.S. Rep. Wasserman Schultz introduced an amendment to the Children's Safety Act of 2005 (H.R. 3132) that provides for the civil confinement of violent sexual predators. Under this amendment, at the end of serving his/her sentence, a violent sexual predator would go before a panel of experts to determine his/her likelihood of recommitting a violent sex crime. If the panel finds the sexual predator to be too dangerous to return to society, then he/she would be civilly confined - outside of a correctional facility - where treatment and rehabilitation efforts would continue. The person would not return to society unless they were deemed to no longer be a threat.

Prior to Wasserman Schultz's amendments, the Children's Safety Act of 2005 provided for civil confinement of violent sexual predators that are under the jurisdiction of the federal courts. However, most sexually violent criminals have violated state, rather than federal, laws. U.S. Rep. Wasserman Schultz's amendment expanded the scope of the legislation creating incentives for states (\$10 million a year per state for four years starting in 2006) to implement civil confinement programs.

The amendment was accepted and passed by the full U.S. House of Representatives. The legislation now is awaiting action in the U.S. Senate. Protecting children from sexual predators is a top priority, and the legislation was the first passed by Congresswoman Wasserman Schultz in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Legislation Would Protect Americans' Right to Travel Abroad

In July, U.S. Rep. Wasserman Schultz sponsored the Life Insurance Fairness for Travelers Act (LIFT Act, H.R. 3639).

Rep. Wasserman Schultz, Rep. Ros-Lehtinen (FL-18), Rep. Bachus (AL-06), Rep. Wexler (FL-19), Rep. Israel (NY-02), and Rep. Crowley (NY-07) joined diplomatic representatives from Colombia, Israel, the Republic of Kenya, representatives from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), B'nai B'rith International, and Hadassah at a press conference to bring attention to this critical issue.

"The freedom to travel is a part of our way of life and if we start denying legal travel abroad, then we give in to Osama Bin Laden, Hezbollah, and other terrorists who wish to change our way of life," said U.S. Rep. Wasserman Schultz.

Currently, life insurance companies can deny coverage to people based solely upon potential legal travel to different international destinations. Some of these countries, such as Israel and the Republic of Kenya, have low intentional death rates; some even lower than that of the United States. (Israel's intentional death rate is 11 per 100,000 compared to the United States' rate of 17 per 100,000.)

The major components of this legislation passed the House of Representatives this year as an amendment to the Terrorism Risk Insurance Extension Act of 2005 (TRIA, H.R. 4314).



A Sunrise Lakes resident joins U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz as she inspects damage to condominiums in Sunrise. Following Hurricane Wilma, federal, state, and local officials met with Debbie to discuss the immediate needs of the community and what support they needed from the federal government.

Supporting Local Banks, Fighting Terrorism

The war on terrorism has two distinct fronts. One is searching out terrorist cells and discovering and preventing physical attacks. The other is an effort to shut down the terrorist finance network that enables terrorists to operate throughout the globe.

In the ongoing effort to detect and root out terrorist financing, U.S. Rep. Wasserman Schultz, a member of the House Financial Services Committee, knows that bankers and our local banks are key resources in halting terrorist financing. Debbie has been instrumental in working with federal departments and local banks to work through problems in legislation that might hamper our ongoing effort to combat terrorism.

It is important to the Congresswoman, however, that legislation seeking to reveal terrorist financing does not do the opposite by driving it underground through excessive reporting requirements that are overly burdensome. Additionally, turf wars between the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State must be set aside.