

Wisconsin Jewish Legislative Day - A Great Day at the Capitol

The 2007 Wisconsin Jewish Legislative Day proved to be another incredible experience. This conference takes place every two years and Jewish communities from all over Wisconsin gather in our state capital to hear from legislative leaders and policy makers, and to advocate for issues important to our community. This year we had close to 85 participants from Madison, Milwaukee, Baraboo and LaCrosse.

Thanks to Michael Blumenfeld and Associates, the day at the Capitol was filled with many meetings involving a large number of different political representatives. There were four issues important to the Jewish community that participants focused on: Expanding long-term care services and protecting Medicaid; increasing access to healthcare; supporting targeted divestment in Sudan; and maintaining Wisconsin's tradition of quality public education.

The morning began with a briefing from Michael Blumenfeld, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Jewish Conference. Then, the group had the opportunity to hear from some of the foremost leaders in the legislature. Senator Fred Risser, Assistant Majority Leader Senator Dave Hansen, and Representative Bill Kramer spoke with our group. Following the speakers, the group moved to the Governor's Conference Room. For the first time in the history of our Legislative Day, Governor Jim Doyle spoke to our group. Governor Doyle spoke about his budget as well as his goals for education and health care and responded to questions. After his talk, participants split up to meet with their State Assembly Representatives. This included meetings with Representatives Spencer Black, Mark Pocan, Sondy Pope-Roberts, Terese Berceau, Dave Travis and J.A. "Doc" Hines.

After a busy morning, the group had lunch at Top of the Park. It was a beautiful space overlooking the Capitol. Many thanks to Netta Levy for helping us with the arrangements. During lunch, the group was greeted by Jewish legislators: Representatives Gary Sherman and Sheldon Wasserman. The featured speakers were Mike Thompson, Executive Assistant to Elizabeth Burmaster, Wisconsin's State Superintendent of Public Instruction. He spoke about the "New Wisconsin Promise," a pledge to provide a quality education for every child in our state. Attorney and education lobbyist Pete Christianson discussed funding for schools in the proposed state budget and some of the specific issues and concerns for school districts.

There was a surprise presentation at the end of the lunch to honor Michael Blumenfeld for all his work with the Wisconsin Jewish Conference. Michael has been the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Jewish Conference for 20 years.

The day concluded with a tour of the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art. Stephen Fleischman, Director of the Museum, greeted the group and then tours were given.

With a long and distinguished list of speakers, the opportunity to influence the legislature and an afternoon with some of Madison's best food and art, it was an informative, inspiring, enjoyable, educational day. We hope you can join us in 2009!