

THE WEEKLY PRINT

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MAY 10, 2026

Longtime ADL head Abe Foxman remembered as 'the kind of leader that all of us aspire to be'

ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt called Foxman, who died on Sunday at 86, 'an iconic Jewish leader who embraced the ideal of an America free from antisemitism and hate'

By Melissa Weiss

Abraham "Abe" Foxman, a towering figure in Jewish communal life who led the Anti-Defamation League for nearly three decades, and whose personal story as a hidden child during the Holocaust gave him a unique gravitas in dealing with issues of Holocaust memory and anti-Jewish bias, died on Sunday, the ADL confirmed. He was 86.

Foxman was born to Polish Jewish parents in present-day Belarus in 1940. As a toddler, his parents placed him in the care of his Catholic nanny, who had him baptized and raised him in the church. After being reunited with his parents at the end of World War II, the family moved into a displaced persons camp in Austria. In 1950, when he was 10 years old, the family immigrated to the U.S.

His early childhood experiences shaped the trajectory of his life. Foxman joined the ADL in 1965 as a legal assistant, becoming the organization's national director in 1987, a post he held until his retirement in 2015. He was succeeded by Jonathan Greenblatt, who serves as the group's CEO.

Foxman was named to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's council by President Ronald Reagan in 1987, a role he was reappointed to by Presidents George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Joe Biden. In recent years, Foxman was the only Holocaust survivor to serve on the board, which now includes a number of children and grandchildren of survivors.

Met Council CEO David Greenfield, who met Foxman while serving on the New York City Council, said the longtime ADL head "really shaped modern Jewish leadership today."

Foxman, Greenfield said, "was the kind of leader that all of us aspire to be. ... I really believe he set the standard, and everyone is still chasing that standard. There was only one Abe Foxman."

In his years at the ADL, Foxman built deep relationships with his staff. Jay Kaiman, the president of the Marcus Foundation, was hired by Foxman to head the group's operations in the Southeast. That relationship endured long after Kaiman left the organization, he told *JL*.

"He was my compass," Kaiman said. "He was invaluable to me as a resource all those years, and he had a lot to offer." Foxman, Kaiman added, "really was a mentor to so many people."

After stepping down from the ADL, Foxman remained active in Jewish communal life. "He really did love his work," Kaiman said, "and he never stopped working, even if he wasn't the ADL director. He was the epitome of being the professional's professional."

Once he was no longer the head of a non-partisan organization, Foxman began to endorse candidates and policies, while speaking out against the mainstream media's coverage of Israel and antisemitism. He endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris' 2024 presidential bid, but became increasingly critical of the Democratic Party's leftward shift on Israel.

Foxman was also critical at times of Republicans and the Trump administration.

Delivering an address last spring at the Capitol to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day, Foxman said, "As a [Holocaust] survivor, my antenna quivers when I see books

being banned, when I see people being abducted in the streets, when I see government trying to dictate what universities should teach and whom they should teach. As a survivor who came to this country as an immigrant, I'm troubled when I hear immigrants and immigration being demonized."

In the same address, he gave credit to both the Biden administration and the second Trump administration for their commitments to addressing antisemitism.

"What made him so unique was he wasn't a Democrat or Republican. He called balls and strikes like he saw them," Greenfield told JI. "He was really one of the few leaders to call out both sides and say, 'Hey, a pox on both of your houses. You both have increasing levels of antisemitism, to new levels never seen before.'"

Deborah Lipstadt, who served as the Biden administration's special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism, knew Foxman for decades. When she was being sued for libel by Holocaust denier David Irving, Foxman was a source of support, she told JI, even bringing a group to the trial in a London court.

She praised Foxman's lifelong commitment to fighting antisemitism. "We've got too many voices that carry with them an

agenda," she said. "His agenda was, 'I hate the Jew-haters.' And he had no patience for the Jew-haters: right, left, center. He had no patience for people who use their position for self-aggrandizement."

Citing record-high levels of antisemitism, Lipstadt called Foxman's death "a big loss for the Jewish people at a particularly crucial moment."

"At a time like this, we have very few voices like that that spoke with a personal and professional authority, a personal and professional commitment, and he shall be deeply missed," Lipstadt said.

Greenblatt said that Foxman was "an iconic Jewish leader who embraced the ideal of an America free from antisemitism and hate and who strongly believed that these scourges could be defeated if good people opposed it."

"In his storied career, Abe transformed ADL while confronting antisemitism and hate (from both left and right), opposing the global rise in antisemitism, holding world leaders accountable and working to ensure that Israel was Jewish, secure and democratic," Greenblatt continued.

"Abe's voice was heard — and listened to — by popes, presidents, and prime ministers, a voice he used wherever Jews were at risk. Abe Foxman spoke on the global stage

with moral authority and clarity and was relentlessly dedicated to his pursuit of a world without hate."

William Daroff, the CEO of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, called Foxman "a mentor, a guide, and a towering presence in Jewish communal life" who "showed a generation of leaders that fighting antisemitism demands clarity, courage, and the willingness to stand firm under pressure."

In a statement, Israeli President Isaac Herzog praised Foxman as a "passionate Zionist, a humanist, and an outspoken, [and] wise friend."

"Coming into a world at war, the Holocaust shaped Abe's character and defined his mission: Combating antisemitism and hypocrisy, calling out racism and bias, speaking up for the Jewish people and the Jewish democratic Israel," Herzog said. "His story, of rising from the ashes, is our story, the story of our people."

Foxman met his wife, Golda Bauman, while attending Camp Herzl in Webster, Wisc. The couple was engaged in Mexico and married in 1967, the same year he joined the ADL.

He is survived by his wife and two children, Michelle and Ariel. ♦

MAY 12, 2026

Daniel Septimus stepping down as Sefaria CEO after 13 years

The organization will soon launch a search for his successor, as Septimus looks for 'new problems to solve, new initiatives to build'

By Jay Deitcher

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

When Daniel Septimus took over as CEO of the fledgling digital Torah library Sefaria in 2013, the nonprofit had a library of 8.5 million words. Thirteen years later, as Septimus is stepping down, Sefaria has a library of 383 million words and more than 1 million monthly users.

"Sefaria began with a dream and developed into a cornerstone of Jewish life," Septimus told *eJewishPhilanthropy*. "I am blessed to have been part of it." He announced on Monday that he will be leaving the organization on June 30. Sefaria plans to begin the search for his successor shortly.

Founded in 2011 by best-selling author Joshua Foer and former Google product manager Brett Lockspeiser, Sefaria set out

to democratize Jewish texts, creating what today is the largest free digital library of Torah literature.

Septimus (not to be confused with Rabbi Daniel Septimus, the inaugural director of the JCC Association of North America's Center for Jewish Peoplehood) joined Sefaria in 2013, as the nonprofit's second employee, months behind Sara Wolkenfeld, the organization's chief learning officer.

The organization had received early funding from the Natan Fund, Jonathan and Tamar Koschitzky and the Jim Joseph Foundation. Sefaria has since secured funding from a large swath of the philanthropic world, including Jim Joseph Foundation, William Davidson Foundation, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies, Crown Family Philanthropies and Maimonides Fund and is at the forefront of the artificial intelligence revolution, offering its open-source Torah to programmers for use in crafting innovative ways to study the texts through its “Powered by Sefaria” initiative.

“I’m proud we were able to build something valued by such a wide spectrum of the Jewish community,” Septimus said about the organization’s accomplishments during his tenure as CEO. “Millions of people, of every age and background, have

used Sefaria to explore corners of our library and tradition that were previously inaccessible to them.”

Septimus is excited by the prospect of AI opening up Jewish learning to even more people, he said. The organization recently released the first comprehensive English translation of *Kli Yakar*, the Torah commentary by Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Luntschitz.

“The opportunities for making Jewish texts even more accessible are truly staggering,” he said. “Today, just 24% of Sefaria’s Hebrew texts are available in English translation. With developments in AI, we have a path to translating everything. We’re also working on an AI agent for Sefaria that will help users find texts and engage meaningfully with them. The digital age has just begun, and Sefaria has a lot of critical work ahead of it.”

Prior to joining Sefaria, Septimus served as CEO of *My Jewish Learning* from January 2007 – July 2013, which merged with the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* in 2015 to form 70 Faces Media, which Septimus continues to support as a member of the executive committee. In addition, he serves as a trustee of The Rabbi Sacks Legacy and has served on the boards of the Luria Academy of Brooklyn and Encounter.

Septimus hopes to continue to support Sefaria in the years to come, with his continued investment in what is now 70 Faces Media serving as a possible example.

“I like building great projects with great teams,” he said. “I’m planning to take a little time off, and then I’ll look for new problems to solve, new initiatives to build and new teammates to partner with.” ♦

MAY 12, 2026

UJA-Federation of New York taps Leffell School’s Michael Kay to serve as next CEO

Kay will assume the role on Oct. 5, as Eric Goldstein departs after 12 years atop the country’s largest Jewish federation

By Nira Dayanim

The country’s largest Jewish federation, UJA-Federation of New York, has reached into the day school world to tap its next leader, naming long-time Jewish educator Michael Kay as CEO, *Jewish Insider* has learned.

In a generational change that signals the growing importance of day schools on the Jewish communal agenda, Kay, who currently serves as head of school at The Leffell School in Westchester County, N.Y., will succeed Eric Goldstein, 66, a former Wall Street lawyer who announced last June that he was stepping down after 12 years in the role. Kay, 46, will enter the position on Oct. 5.

Goldstein steered New York’s Jewish community through a series of crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas terror attacks and the surge in

antisemitism and multiple wars that followed. Though last year’s announcement set Goldstein’s departure for the end of the fiscal year in June, he will now remain in the role until Oct. 4.

Kay inherits a key leadership position in a complex, often divided New York Jewish community. Over the last three years, new cracks have emerged and old ones have widened within the community in the aftermath of the Oct. 7 attacks. In November, exit polls showed that 33% of Jewish voters cast their ballots for New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, an outspoken critic of Israel who has clashed with Jewish leaders and organizations, including UJA-Federation of New York.

Asked how he wants UJA’s relationship with Mamdani to look under his leadership during an interview with *Jewish Insider* an-

nouncing his appointment, Kay emphasized UJA’s commitment to advocating for the well-being of the Jewish community with local officials, “no matter who they are.”

“We have an obligation and a responsibility to work with our local elected officials no matter who they are to ensure that our needs are met and they are accountable for meeting those needs, as I said, well-being, thriving, safety, security,” Kay said. “I start the job in five months, I’m sure that there will be a lot of conversation between now and then with our government relations team about the specific best way to interact with City Hall to achieve that, but we’re not going to lose sight of what those goals are.”

Joining the New York federation after 13 years at the Leffell School, an independent K-12 school with nearly 900 students —

formerly a Solomon Schechter school — Kay brings decades of experience in Jewish education to the role.

Prior to Leffell, Kay also served as Upper School principal and director of Judaic studies at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in Rockville, Md., and led Camp Givah, a Jewish summer camp in upstate New York — both pluralistic institutions. He is also an alumnus of the Wexner Graduate Fellowship.

Kay's appointment comes as Jewish education and day school affordability have become priorities for the Jewish Federations of North America. Recently, the organization has lobbied governors to adopt a federal tax credit that could reduce the financial burden of Jewish day school tuition, marking JFNA's growing foray into issues of day school affordability and school choice. Earlier this week, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul stated her intention to opt-in to the tax credit.

Asked what he thinks the New York federation should do to advance day school affordability and Jewish education in New York, Kay acknowledged the role of childhood Jewish education in fostering long-term relationships with Judaism, stating that UJA has a responsibility to promote "Jewish engagement in all its forms."

"I think it's critically important. We have data showing that students who grow up experiencing Jewish education at a young age are substantially more likely to support Israel on their college campuses, and to take on roles of leadership in the Jewish community," he said.

Kay is also a senior lay leader and member at Temple Israel Center of White Plains, the egalitarian Conservative congregation that he attends with his wife, Rachel, and their two children.

Announcing his appointment, UJA-Federation highlighted Kay's work in expand-

ing and strengthening philanthropic support for The Leffell School, including through UJA's Day School Challenge Fund, and his capabilities as a unifying leader, skilled in bringing people together across differences and partisan divides "through respectful dialogue."

"It has been the privilege of a lifetime to lead UJA-Federation," Goldstein said in a statement. "Michael has proven throughout his career an ability to bring the full spectrum of our community together, building trust across differences and harnessing our diversity as a source of strength. That experience will be invaluable to UJA's next chapter."

Entering his role the day after the bodies of three kidnapped and slain Israeli teenagers were recovered in the West Bank, Goldstein's 12-year tenure as CEO of the continent's largest Jewish federation provided a constant in a particularly tumultuous period for North American Jewry.

Goldstein, whose appointment — as the first Orthodox head of the organization — raised eyebrows within the New York community, led the organization through a period of rising domestic antisemitism. That period was bookended by 2017's Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Va., and the 2018 deadly shooting at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life Synagogue that killed 11 congregants — and the recent set of deadly attacks on Jewish institutions following the Israel-Hamas war. Under Goldstein, in late 2019, the UJA-Federation of New York and the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York launched the Community Security Initiative, a program designed to protect the Jewish community from violent threats and antisemitic incidents. Since its inception, as threats against the community have continued to mount, the program has grown significantly.

Goldstein also steered the organization both through funding shortfalls during the COVID-19 pandemic, forgoing his own salary for the 2021 fiscal year, and a massive influx of donations for emergency relief after the Oct. 7 attacks.

"We are deeply grateful to Eric S. Goldstein, whose 12 years of leadership leave UJA in a position of strength as we look to the future," Marc Rowan, the federation's board chair, said in a statement.

According to the federation, more than 40 candidates were considered for the role, in a search conducted by a 14-member search committee, led by Linda Mirels, the federation's board president, and supported by global search firm Heidrick & Struggles. Kay's selection was unanimous.

"Michael is the right leader for this defining moment," said Rowan. "He is battle-tested — unflappable under pressure and willing to take on the most pressing challenges facing our community, from the safety and security of the Jewish people to the urgent work of strengthening Israel as a Jewish and democratic state."

At the end of June, Mirels and Rowan, will both conclude their three-year terms. Suzanne Peck and David Wasserman, both of whom served on the search committee, will succeed Rowan and Mirels as president and chair, respectively.

"Michael distinguished himself as a singular and compelling leader — a truly original thinker whose intellect, moral seriousness, and vision for Jewish life set him apart," said Mirels. "He is an eloquent and persuasive communicator with a long record of inspiring the next generation of proud Jews and Zionists. The work ahead is real — strengthening Jewish identity and pride, deepening commitment to Israel, confronting rising antisemitism, and caring for global Jewry and New Yorkers in need. Michael is the leader our community needs for the work ahead." ♦

After Trump proclamation, Jewish groups scramble to plan ‘Shabbat 250,’ even as some have concerns

Some Jewish organizations — mainly Orthodox and conservative — hail the initiative for spotlighting Jews and the day of rest, while others have misgivings over the mingling of religion and state

By Jay Deitcher

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Last week, President Donald Trump proclaimed this year’s Jewish American Heritage Month and left many Jewish leaders floored.

In addition to the perfunctory celebration of “the countless contributions” that Jewish Americans have made to the nation, Trump declared the first national Shabbat, beginning at sundown on May 15, “in special honor of 250 glorious years of American independence.”

“I was blown away,” Rabbi Eliezer Wolf of Miami’s Beit David Highland Lakes Shul, told *eJewishPhilanthropy*. “I [couldn’t] believe what I [was] reading. No president has ever done that. A president doesn’t need to do that. This was something that was very unique, especially during a time like this, where Jews, even in America, are feeling a lot of hate.”

Immediately, Wolf, a Chabad-ordained rabbi, knew that he needed to get planning, and two days after Trump’s proclamation, his congregation announced “a Shabbat dinner celebrating religious freedom for 250 years in the great USA.”

While many Jewish groups — predominantly Orthodox and conservative ones — have wholeheartedly embraced “Shabbat 250,” as it was dubbed, other more progressive organizations and congregations have expressed ambivalence and misgivings about it, concerned that such an initiative erodes the religious freedoms that Jews in particular have fought so hard to establish and protect in the United States.

Rabbi Amicha Lau-Lavie, of the progressive Lab/Shul in New York City, discussed his concerns in a note to members, acknowledging the political issues with the initiative while stressing the importance of Shabbat.

“I propose that we show up for Shabbat, but that we rewrite the guest list. I suggest

we each adapt this ‘National Shabbat’ in our own unique way — not because a leader commanded it, but because our humanity demands it,” Lau-Lavie wrote. “I encourage us to set the table for a fabulous Friday night dinner or Saturday brunch as our oldest tech tool for dialogue and discussion. Fill your table with friends, but also with those you don’t agree with. Debate this day and what it means for you in this confusing context.”

For Yitzchok Tendler, the co-founder of Young Jewish Conservatives, the friends that he wants to fill his table with for Shabbat 250 are “young American Jews who are politically conservative, who might not be Orthodox or Shabbat-observant,” he told eJP.

His organization, which functions under the nonprofit Jewish Heritage Movement, is offering \$180 micro-grants, supported by anonymous donors, for young, politically conservative Jews to hold Shabbat dinners honoring the occasion.

The organization’s marquee event is an annual Shabbat dinner held at the Conservative Political Action Conference, last hosted in Grapevine, Texas, in March. “Had there been more advanced notice, we would probably have organized in-person Shabbat programs like we do throughout the year around the country,” Tendler said. “Considering the short notice, we figured that the second-best thing we can do is empower people to organize their own Shabbat in their own homes.”

The practice of marking the Sabbath, once confined to Jewish circles, has become increasingly mainstream in politically conservative circles, even non-Jewish ones, he said, particularly since the assassination of right-wing activist Charlie Kirk in September. Kirk’s final book, which he finished writing weeks before his killing, was titled *Stop, in the Name of God: Why Honoring the Sabbath Will Transform Your Life*.

One hundred and thirty applications for micro-grants flooded into YJC from across the country, and even one from an American student studying in the United Kingdom. The demand was so great that the organization had to shutter the online form within days and will have to turn down many applicants, but it is prioritizing young right-wing Jews hosting Shabbat dinners for the first time and has already handed out \$5,000, according to YJC.

“This declaration of Shabbat 250 is in line with the kind of relationship that we’ve seen from this White House with American Jewry,” Tendler said, pointing to a summit for young Jewish leaders to discuss antisemitism held last June at the White House, which YJC helped organize. “Our organization has had very positive experiences [with the Trump administration].”

As the national Shabbat inches closer, grassroots websites have also popped up, though their provenance and affiliations of these are unclear. One entrepreneurial site, “Shabbat250 kit,” sells traditional pre-cooked meals, complete with frozen cholent and babka.

Chabad — which as a movement distances itself from partisan politics, but whose members generally support conservative parties — has also embraced Shabbat 250, with many local communities holding related events.

“As the Rebbe noted, this nation’s founders recognized that [the United States’] establishment was guided by divine providence — and that the freedoms it affords are endowed by the creator,” Rabbi Motti Seligson, director of public relations for Chabad, told eJP, referring to the late Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson. “That’s a vision Jews have always understood — and Shabbat is how we’ve always expressed it.”

Representatives from Yeshiva University, Rabbinical Council of America and the Or-

thodox Union sent an email to affiliated congregational rabbis reiterating Trump's call and encouraging "that this sense of *Hakarat Hatov* [gratitude] find particular expression during the recitation of the *tefillah* [prayers] for the United States government, a moment already designated within our *tefillah* to acknowledge the kindness and protection afforded to us that we do not take for granted."

When Rabbi Yehoshua Mizrachi, who serves the B'nai Israel Synagogue in Pensacola, Fla., announced an event tied to Shabbat 250, titled "A Shabbat for America," the majority of congregants were elated, but others felt "anything that Trump does is inherently tainted," he told eJP.

"I try to remind these people that this is not political. If President Obama had made a similar declaration, we would be doing the same thing," he said.

Mizrachi sees the event, held during weekly services with a *kiddush* luncheon organized by his wife, a professional chef, as an opportunity to bond with non-Jewish neighbors, including Christian congregations and members of B'nei Noach, a congregation of non-Jews who follow the so-called Seven Noahide Laws.

"The *Beit Hamikdash* [Holy Temple] is called a house of prayer for all people," Mizrachi said. "The shul is a mini *Beit Hamikdash* until the *Beit Hamikdash* is restored, so to have people not of the Jewish faith come join us in prayer is a very, very powerful thing."

The national Shabbat is "a very important opportunity to make a statement," he said. "The Torah says those who bless the Jewish people will be blessed, and those who curse us will be cursed. It's said to Avraham, then it's reiterated to Yitzchak. It's reiterated to Jacob. And so we want to give the community a chance to join with us and receive those blessings."

But other Jewish leaders are uncomfortable with a national event based around any religion, and the majority of organizations that are celebrating Shabbat 250 lean Orthodox, a group that predominantly supported Trump in the last election.

"There's a fine line between celebrating Jewish heritage and identity, which our government should be doing, and breaking the important barrier between church and state, which has protected the Jewish community and so many others in this country for generations," Amy Spitalnick, CEO of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, told eJP.

America provided Jews with refuge because it allowed them to live and practice freely, without privilege or prejudice based on their beliefs, Spitalnick said. When Church and state lines are blurred, no matter which faith seems favored or endorsed, it opens the door to trouble.

"One day you're in and the next day you could be out," she said. "When the government starts breaking down that line between church and state, no matter the religion, it ultimately is going to create a situation in which Jews, or any other community, might

be on the wrong side at one point, either under this administration or the next."

Spitalnick noted that Trump in particular has repeatedly weighed in on what makes a good Jew, saying for example that "any Jewish person that votes for Democrats hates their religion." She also said that this proclamation comes as other members of the administration have been accused of proselytizing from their official platforms.

However, she said, "if it is simply a celebration of Jewish identity and practice, then that's very different than trying to utilize the government to advance a specific approach to religion or a specific way of practicing."

Wolf said that some of his congregants were also uncomfortable with the event the synagogue is planning because they are uncomfortable with the president. However, he emphasized that the event is not about who is in power, but about the acknowledgment of respect by the head of a world superpower.

His congregation was one of the first to announce an event and is planning to go all out for the dinner, adorning the synagogue in Americana and pictures of Jewish American accomplishments.

Wolf, who was born and raised in Australia, also hopes to tailor the menu to American foods, which can be tricky, he said, when the first thing people think of are burgers and fries. "America has very sloppy national foods — not such gourmet things for Shabbat dinner." ♦

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Race to replace Pelosi offers early test of whether progressive Jews welcomed on the left

State Sen. Scott Wiener has called Israel's actions in Gaza a genocide and is open to conditions on offensive aid to the Jewish state, but is still derided as a 'Zionist'

By Gabe Stutman

A solemn California state Sen. Scott Wiener looked directly into the camera.

He was recording a video to "clarify" whether he believed Israel had committed genocide in Gaza. Four days earlier, he wavered on that question in front of a live

audience during a candidate forum for the race to fill the seat of Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) in California's 11th Congressional District.

Both of his opponents had quickly answered "yes," that Israel had committed

genocide. Wiener did not answer "yes" or "no," drawing loud jeers.

"For many Jews, associating the word genocide with the Jewish State of Israel is deeply painful and frankly traumatic," Wiener said in the follow-up video. Wiener grew up in a Conservative family in New

Jersey, supports a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and has long been a critic of the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. “We all have eyes,” he continued, “and we see the absolute devastation and catastrophic death toll in Gaza.”

Referring also to what he described as “genocidal statements” from Israeli officials, he said the Israeli government had “tried to destroy Gaza and to push Palestinians out. That qualifies as a genocide.”

The striking about-face, which drew swift rebukes from mainstream Jewish organizations in the Bay Area, was indicative of the immense pressure on Wiener, a gay, progressive Jew who has often been assailed as a “Zionist” by the far left in San Francisco, but who is also harshly critical of the Israeli government’s policies.

One of Wiener’s top challengers for the San Francisco seat, Saikat Chakrabarti, is running a well-funded campaign closely aligned with the anti-Israel left, embracing some of the most extreme voices in that camp.

The race has become somewhat of a proxy battle in the war for the identity of the Democratic Party, where describing Israel’s war in Gaza as a genocide, supporting arms embargoes to Israel and attacking Zionism as a racist ideology have become much more common since the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas terrorist attacks and the subsequent war in Gaza. The outcome of the race to succeed Pelosi will help answer an important question: Can a progressive candidate still win in a deep-blue district like San Francisco without fully embracing the politics of the anti-Zionist left?

The race is by most accounts a three-way contest between Wiener, Connie Chan, a progressive member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors who has the backing of major labor organizations but has struggled to compete in fundraising, and Chakrabarti, a wealthy tech entrepreneur who entered progressive politics working for Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) during his 2016 presidential bid and later served as Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s (D-NY) chief of staff.

Chakrabarti has attacked Wiener for being too supportive of Israel, describing him

as “horrible on Palestinian rights” in an interview with *Zeteo*’s Mehdi Hasan.

Wiener had already been sharply critical of Israel’s tactics in Gaza prior to the controversy in January. He had called for a cease-fire early in the conflict, and has described Israel’s actions as a “moral stain” and “indefensible.”

Amid the controversy of his embrace of the term genocide and the ensuing fallout with mainstream Jewish community organizations in the Bay Area, Wiener stepped down as co-chair of the California Legislative Jewish Caucus.

Chakrabarti, for his part, has raced to the left of Wiener and embraced far-left streamer Hasan Piker as a prominent campaign supporter, appearing on Piker’s stream and inviting Piker to campaign with him at a rally in San Francisco last week.

Earlier this spring, in a video the Chakrabarti campaign published on social media, the candidate and Piker sat down for dinner in San Francisco so Chakrabarti could make his pitch to Piker’s audience of millions of mostly young viewers. Behind them sat a poster showing the outline of the map of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza — the entire map filled in with the colors of the Palestinian flag.

“There’s this massive change moment. There’s a bunch of popular outrage,” Chakrabarti said in between bites of food. “We could channel that into an actual political revolution.”

As a wealthy former tech entrepreneur who has poured millions into his own campaign, Chakrabarti might seem like an unusual candidate for that role. But he is banking on enthusiasm from the progressive left in an insurgent campaign for a seat that has not been vacant for a generation.

He is described as a “centimillionaire” in the local press and was an early employee at Stripe, the payment processing company. But his campaign has touted his progressive bona fides as a co-founder of Justice Democrats, the organization built to recruit and elect progressives.

Ocasio-Cortez has repeatedly declined to endorse her former top staffer, dealing a blow to his efforts to consolidate the left behind his campaign.

Jewish community leaders have at times described the race in stark terms, painting Chakrabarti as a threat.

Speaking about what he called the “extreme story” that Chakrabarti is telling voters, Tyler Gregory, CEO of the local Jewish Community Relations Council, said, “this is more than a policy difference [in the] race at this point. There is someone scary, who is actually going to undermine Jewish safety if elected.”

The Chakrabarti campaign did not respond to an emailed list of concerns raised by Jewish groups. Polling shows Chakrabarti making inroads but lagging behind Wiener. An EMC Research poll conducted in early May and commissioned by a pro-Wiener super PAC showed Wiener at 38%, Chan at 22% and Chakrabarti at 21%. Polls sponsored by Chakrabarti’s campaign, however, show a much slimmer margin; one conducted in early April by Data for Progress had Wiener only leading Chakrabarti by five points, 33-28%.

The top two vote-getters, regardless of party, will move to a runoff in November, meaning the race is unlikely to be decided until the general election.

Close observers of San Francisco politics say the race reflects political divides that have long been salient in the city, but have intensified in recent years amid widespread dissatisfaction on issues such as street crime, public drug use, homelessness and disorder more broadly.

Chakrabarti is “running against the establishment, when people feel like it’s not working for them,” said Gregory. “San Francisco has been tacking to the middle in recent cycles,” Gregory added, pointing to the 2024 election of Daniel Lurie to be the city’s mayor and the 2022 recall of progressive prosecutor Chesa Boudin.

“Are we in an anti-establishment cycle, or are we in a moderate cycle?” Gregory said. “We’ll find out.”

Chakrabarti’s campaign has decisively outspent his opponents, according to the most recently available campaign filings, though Wiener has also raised millions of dollars. As of the most recent filing deadline, the Chakrabarti campaign raised about \$5.2 million, of which \$4.82 million came via a loan from the candidate himself.

Wiener's campaign had raised about \$3.5 million as of the last filing deadline, but had only spent around \$900,000 relative to Chakrabarti's nearly \$5 million. Chan's campaign was lagging with just \$459,000 in money raised.

Chakrabarti opposes all U.S. military funding to Israel, including for the Iron Dome missile-defense system, and said during a candidate forum that he supports "breaking the Israel lobby's hold on our government." For his part, Wiener said he supports funding for Iron Dome but also would support congressional efforts to block the sale of offensive weapons to Israel.

Chakrabarti also opposes a new California law aimed at combating antisemitism in K-12 schools that critics, including anti-Zionist activists, say infringes on the free speech of teachers. Chakrabarti has attacked Wiener for being an outspoken supporter of the measure, describing it as a Trump-like effort to tamp down on pro-Palestinian speech.

Wiener called AB 715, which establishes a statewide antisemitism prevention coordinator and seeks to curb teacher activism in the classroom after the proliferation of anti-Israel material across California, "a big step for the Jewish community."

Raising concerns among Jewish community groups, Chakrabarti enthusiastically accepted an endorsement from the Arab Resource and Organizing Center Action, the political arm of the city's most prominent anti-Zionist activist group, which helps organize rowdy anti-Israel protests in the Bay Area.

"In Congress, I look forward to working with AROC Action as we fight to end our country's complicity in genocide and

apartheid and pursue a just future for all," Chakrabarti's campaign wrote on Instagram last month.

Mail-in voting has already begun for the open primary, which takes place on June 2.

Among Wiener's campaign supporters are wealthy tech and venture capital figures including Garry Tan, CEO of the prestigious VC firm Y Combinator, Yelp co-founder Jeremy Stoppelman and tech investor Chris Larsen.

Political insiders in the city say that Wiener will almost certainly be among the top two vote getters and advance to the general. Chan is popular with a number of established progressive institutions. Chakrabarti's success will depend in part on whether he is able to get out voters who have not consistently participated in midterm elections.

Wiener "has a very strong base of frequent voters, in the LGBTQ community, in the YIMBY community, and with the majority of moderate — by San Francisco standards — voters in the city," said Sam Lauter, a political strategist with BMWL public affairs and a Democratic activist who sits on the board of the Democratic Majority for Israel.

"Connie Chan has a passionate base within the politically engaged progressive community," he added. "The unions, for example." He added that he expects Chan to have considerable support from the Chinese American community.

Chakrabarti's support "seems to be coming from people who haven't, to date, frequently turned out to vote. Progressives who aren't in tune with the established progressive community," he said.

"Having said that, he certainly has increased his name recognition significantly with his personal spending," Lauter added. "I think he has a very good shot of being in the final two."

Among Chakrabarti's top aides is the consultant and activist Nadia Rahman, an outspoken anti-Zionist who serves as the campaign's political director. Rahman, who publishes a stream of harsh critiques of Israel, Zionism and Zionists on her social media feeds, attributed the Democrats' loss in the 2024 presidential election to what she described as the party's refusal to "break from genocide, militarism and imperialism." She recently reposted an X post stating that "Zionism is racism," and in another post criticized how "entrenched Zionist ideology is in many California state legislators."

Wiener is endorsed by the state's Democratic Party and has been a fixture in San Francisco city politics since his election to the city Board of Supervisors in 2010. Still, he has not won the endorsement of Pelosi, who appeared at a Chan fundraiser but has declined to endorse anyone.

On Jewish support after Wiener's genocide statement, Gregory said donors fell into three camps. Some continued to back Wiener without hesitation. Others "needed to take a beat and process what happened." The third group "hasn't come around," but Gregory added, "I'm becoming more and more confident they are going to come home" to Wiener.

Gregory added of Chakrabarti, considering the tendency for left-wing candidates to turn out low-propensity voters, "Our community would be foolish to underestimate him." ♦

MAY 11, 2026

Minnesota Vikings owner Mark Wilf leads players, high school students on Holocaust Museum trip

The players also toured the National Museum of African American History as part of the D.C. visit

By Matthew Shea

Minnesota Vikings owner Mark Wilf, the son of Holocaust survivors, believes that his family's history and his role owning an NFL franchise give him a unique responsibility: to use his platform to educate younger generations about the dangers of antisemitism and bigotry.

That mission was on display Saturday, when Wilf was joined by Vikings defensive tackle Levi Drake Rodriguez, offensive lineman Walter Rouse, defensive end Elijah Williams and former Vikings tight end Vis-anthe Shiancoe as the group took a tour of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum together with a group of Black and Indigenous Minneapolis-area high school students.

The visit marked the sixth such trip coordinated by the Vikings and the nonprofit Project Success and was aimed at exposing students to history through tours of both the Holocaust museum and the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

"It's very important for young people to learn about history and how they can make an impact on the world and society," Wilf told *Jewish Insider* during the group's guided tour of the Holocaust museum. "To learn the history of the world — where sometimes there's hatred and bigotry and see what it can lead to — and also learn the impact of an individual: how an individual can change things, can fight back and how we can set an example by being tolerant and learning from each other."

Wilf and his brother, Zygi Wilf, have owned the Minnesota Vikings since 2005. Wilf's family has long supported Holocaust education and survivor organizations, including Yad Vashem, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York. He is the current chair of the Jewish Agency for Israel, after

recently serving as chair of the Jewish Federations of North America.

During World War II, Wilf's father, Joseph, was deported with his family to a Siberian labor camp. His mother, Elizabeth, survived by escaping the Lvov ghetto and hiding in a barn with her family until liberation. Joseph and Elizabeth met at a displaced persons camp in Germany after the war, married and came to America.

For Wilf, the Vikings' partnership with Project Success connects his professional platform with that family legacy.

"My parents, grandparents, are all Holocaust survivors, so it's deeply personal to myself and my family," Wilf said. "We're very privileged to be in this country and as Americans, and being part of the NFL ... so I'm going to use that platform to help educate."

The veteran Vikings owner acknowledged that antisemitism is "much more out there" today, but emphasized that the need for education remains constant. "It doesn't matter when the time is, to be educated is important," he said. "Every generation has to learn that history over and over again. The bigotries, the prejudices, the hatreds — these lessons are always critical to making society better."

"All these lessons from history, these things happened, and now, by going through these museums and being on the street, they [the students] are now witnesses, and they have a responsibility to tell, to learn that as individuals they can make an impact," he added.

Beyond exposing students to Holocaust history, Wilf said it was also important for Vikings players to join the tour — both to help guide the students and to experience the history themselves.

"Our Vikings players are so appreciative of representing the Vikings and being here," Wilf said. "People look up to professional

athletes like the Minnesota Vikings. We're appreciative that they're great ambassadors for our organization, and they're learning as well at the same time."

Rouse, an offensive tackle who was selected in the sixth round of the 2024 NFL Draft, told *Ji* that it was his first time on the trip and that he would not hesitate to do it again. He said the experience was especially enlightening for him based on "how little I learned in high school on what happened in the Holocaust."

"The main thing I knew was about Anne Frank and Auschwitz," Rouse said. "It's important that everyone at least understands and gets a glimpse of what happened with the Holocaust, especially with the state of the world today."

"The fact that you had people [Wilf's parents] that were able to survive the Holocaust and still persevere through to have raised someone like Mark and have that strength to move forward and to get through that evil — it's just important," he added. "It's a disgusting part of the history of the world, but I think it's important that everyone knows about that."

Rouse said that having the students in attendance was especially important:

"A few of them [the students] talked about how they didn't even know a lot about the Holocaust, they only learned a couple things," Rouse said. "They may have known a lot about slavery, but they didn't know about the Holocaust. Being able to see that perspective actually brings us closer together because we have more things in common with one another. I think that's one thing that we can connect and share and come together that can just help bring us forward."

Rouse said the effort is something that more NFL teams and players should emulate. "I think there are players in every single team that do want to get involved, do

want to help,” he said. “And there are students across the country in each and every state that would not hesitate to say yes and come to something like this and be part of the experience. I think we should do this for as many people as we can.”

Williams, a defensive end who signed with the Vikings in 2025, said the most important part of the experience was “understanding history.” Echoing Rouse, Williams said the museum tour offered a closer look at a subject he felt was not taught in enough depth in school.

“In school, you don’t really get too in-depth of all the atrocities. But when you get into these museums, you really get the un-

filtered truth. That’s what we need in society — unfiltered truth so we don’t sugarcoat the atrocities of the past,” Williams said. “We tend to repeat it [history], and this is just another example of the hatred in the world and how we need to avoid it.”

But while the players had their own takeaways from the experience, Williams similarly emphasized that “the kids being here was way more important than us [the players] being here.”

“The younger generation is always going to be the future, even though we’re not that many years apart,” Williams said. “I feel like them being here is just going to help bring

more change into this world, more than the previous generations could bring.”

Rodriguez, a defensive tackle and seventh-round selection in the 2024 NFL Draft for the Vikings, said the experience was important in bringing the history “to light.”

“I think it just brings to light the history that is brutal, heartbreaking and gut-wrenching, and shows how we could seek a change in our lives and get more knowledge from that,” Rodriguez said. “Just how many souls had to fight day in and day out. You can’t even put into words, honestly, the [amount of] mass casualties that took place. And for what? Someone’s race, skin color or ethnicity? It’s insane.” ♦

MAY 14, 2026

Democratic leaders sound concerned note about party’s pro-Israel creds at JDCA summit

JDCA’s top activists made clear this week that a major concern is making sure pro-Israel Jews continue to be welcome in the party

By Gabby Deutch

When a group of Jewish Democratic activists and donors convened in Washington this week for the annual leadership summit of the Jewish Democratic Council of America, the message seemed to be one of defiance: defiance against President Donald Trump, to be sure, but also a defiant attitude pushing back against some of the recent shifts within the party.

JDCA’s primary objective is to elect Democrats. But as more Democrats have taken positions critical of or outright hostile to Israel, JDCA’s top activists made clear this week that another major concern is making sure pro-Israel Jews continue to be welcome in the party.

“We are fighting to ensure that the views and values of Jewish Americans continue to find their political home in the Democratic Party in Michigan and beyond, and we have work to do,” Halie Soifer, the group’s CEO, said on Tuesday night. She noted that the JDCA hopes to help defeat Michigan Senate candidate Abdul El-Sayed,

a far-left candidate who appears to be rising in the polls.

“It’s clear there’s one candidate whose views are antithetical to ours, and we want to ensure he’s defeated,” said Soifer, though she did not name El-Sayed directly. JDCA has not endorsed either of his opponents, state Sen. Mallory McMorrow or Rep. Haley Stevens (D-MI).

“We at JDCA only support Democrats, but we do not support them all,” Soifer told the summit. “We understand it’s not just about electing Democrats. It’s about electing Democrats who align with us, and this includes efforts to ensure that candidates who have espoused anti-Israel and/or anti-semitic views are defeated before November.”

Over the two-day gathering, a parade of high-profile speakers from Democratic leadership — Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY), along with Reps. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Steny Hoyer (D-MD), respectively the former

House speaker and majority leader — addressed the convening. Their appearances seemed designed to affirm that Democrats remain pro-Israel and committed to fighting antisemitism.

“We have to decisively confront antisemitism from wherever it comes from,” said Jeffries. “I will always hold firm in my support for the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state and eternal homeland for the Jewish people.”

Schumer did not specifically discuss Israel but raised concerns about the increasing use of the word “Zionist” as a slur.

“I’ve long said we must fight antisemitism wherever and whenever it appears, even if it’s in our own party. I’ll continue to do so,” said Schumer. “Today, antisemitism takes all different forms: Holocaust denial, conspiratorial delusions of Jewish or Zionist control of the world, replacing the word ‘Jewish’ with the word ‘Zionist’ to demonize Jewish communities.”

The outgoing Democratic leaders were not as sanguine, instead offering a note of

caution about how the dynamic towards Israel has shifted within the Democratic Party.

“Always, but right now, we really have to work together to make sure that support for Israel is, without question, bipartisan,” Pelosi said. “It doesn’t mean we don’t have our differences of opinion ... but it should not weaken the fact that we have bipartisan support. That has always been the tradition, and we must make sure we get through this place where we are, where there may be some doubt in people’s minds as to whether that is a value.”

Pelosi is retiring at the end of this year, as is Hoyer, who was even more blunt: “How many of you have been anxious yourselves about rhetoric heard from some Democratic officials and candidates? We ought to be,” he said.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, Sen. Chris Coons (D-DE) said he hoped to prove that Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) does not speak for the party on matters related to Israel, though he noted with worry that Sanders’ attitude — one that is deeply critical of Israel — appears to be on the rise.

“It’s clearer and clearer to me that there is real alarm about a fundamental break between Democrats as a party and Israel as a nation, and I’m going to do everything I can to resist and oppose that break, while criticizing [Benjamin] Netanyahu and his values and decisions,” said Coons. “I’m trying to be an effective and engaged voice with a perspective that you just heard and not have Bernie Sanders be the only senator whose perspective and attitude is heard across the country.”

Forty Senate Democrats voted last month for a Sanders-authored resolution attempting to block some arms sales to Israel, a record high. Coons said he knows those senators still support Israel’s right to exist, but cautioned that being too critical of Netanyahu can give cover to people who are actually anti-Israel.

“I strongly support Israel’s right to exist, its right to be a Jewish homeland and a democracy, and its value to the American people as a partner and ally,” said Coons. “I think we are at risk of some of my colleagues, in trying to send a message to Netanyahu or in opposition to his policies and stances, to be misunderstood as abandoning that commitment.”

Coons said that on the campaign trail, and on recent trips around the country, he hears “profound concern about where’s the Democratic Party going on Israel.” Some Jewish politicians who addressed the JDCA summit expressed a deeper sense of unease and discomfort about their Jewish identity, against the backdrop of rising antisemitism.

Sen. Elissa Slotkin (D-MI), who spoke at a cocktail reception Tuesday evening, talked about how challenging it is to be a Jewish elected official in the current environment.

“It has become deeply, deeply complicated to be a Jew in America,” said Slotkin. “There’s not a single day that goes by for myself representing the state of Michigan that I am not feeling torn.”

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey delivered a jolt of energy to the room with an impassioned speech about his community’s support for immigrants in the face of ICE en-

forcement activity, which resulted in the killing of two American citizens by ICE agents in his city in January. When a JDCA member asked him for advice on how to respond to others in the Democratic Party who have made anti-Zionism a political litmus test, he expressed concern.

“It has been deeply concerning for me personally, as a proud Jew,” Frey said. “I am a great supporter of the endurance of our American Republic, a big believer that America should continue to exist, and an adamant opponent of Donald Trump. The same thing can apply to Israel.”

Ultimately, though, the gathering was a political pep rally — a chance for Democratic activists and donors to hear from politicians at all levels of government and gin up excitement ahead of this year’s midterm elections. Everyone who addressed the gathering all but guaranteed that Democrats would take back control of the House and Senate.

The conversations seemed meant to reassure Jewish Democrats about both the party’s fortunes for November and its treatment of pro-Israel Jews. One JDCA activist described the group’s work as “grasstops,” which was demonstrated by the appearances from top party leaders.

But the anti-Israel sentiment that has steadily grown within the party over the past three years is not coming from party leaders; it is driven by far-left activists. Whether JDCA has a plan to counter that grassroots energy remains to be seen — and the answer will only come at the ballot box later this year. ♦