

THE WEEKLY PRINT

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AUGUST 20, 2026

Socialist surge happening in under-the-radar local and state legislative races

A Brookings Institution study found that of the 104 Democratic Socialists of America-backed candidates running for state legislature, nearly 75% have won their primaries

By Marc Rod

The Democratic Socialists of America notched another win this week in Florida's Democratic Senate primary, with the shock victory of state Rep. Angie Nixon, a DSA member, over a much better-funded, establishment-backed challenger.

The far-left group has also notched at least six new victories in deep-blue House districts where its members are all but guaranteed to be elected, and could lead four major U.S. cities — New York, Los Angeles, Seattle and Washington, D.C. — after the midterm elections.

But some of the group's more overlooked victories have happened at the state level, where the DSA members could wield significant power if they win. A new study by the Brookings Institution, released Wednesday, found that of the 104 state legislative candidates endorsed by national or local DSA chapters in 2026, 76 have won their primaries or advanced to the general election without a primary.

At the local level, another 64 of the 99

DSA-endorsed candidates are moving on to the general election. By comparison, at the congressional level, only 20 of the 64 total DSA-endorsed candidates have made it to general election races.

In New York City, already a comparative bastion of DSA representation in the state Assembly and Senate, eight DSA endorsees have advanced to the general election, including state Senate candidate Aber Kaway, who downplayed the 9/11 attacks, as well as seven state Assembly candidates. In total, the group is expected to have at least 15 members in Albany next year.

Sara Forman, the former executive director of the New York Solidarity Network, a state-level Jewish advocacy organization, said that after New York City Zohran Mamdani's victory, the DSA seems to be emboldened to "flex their muscles" nationwide, after previously taking a more "surgical" approach at the state and local level.

Forman, who is now a senior advisor at Optimistic Labs, said she thinks the group

learned lessons from the Mamdani race, including targeting highly engaged communities and neighborhoods. She also emphasized that the group has spent two decades building out the infrastructure that fueled the recent victories highlighted in the Brookings data.

"The Jewish community needs to take a hard look at this and really decide whether or not we're willing to break bread" with a group that only looks at the Jewish community for "how they can use us," she continued, while adding that Jewish community members will likely need to engage with some DSA elected officials in some capacity.

The national DSA organization endorses only a small subset of the DSA-affiliated candidates running nationwide. But outside of New York, five of its endorsees have advanced to general election races in state assembly seats around the country, with some set to coast to election and others facing competitive general election races: Robert LeVertis Bell in Kentucky,

Tammy Carpenter in Oregon, Chris Gilmer-Hill in Michigan, Luke Alfaro-Jungmann in New Mexico and Mathewos Samson in Georgia.

Local DSA groups have racked up many more wins, such as state Rep. Maryam Khan's ouster of an incumbent in a recent Hartford, Conn.-area state Senate seat.

"It's interesting to me that the places where you've seen a lot of the newer elected officials pop up were a little unexpected, Connecticut being one example," Forman said.

The state-level wins carry the potential to advance the DSA's agenda, particularly in places such as New York, where the DSA expects its endorsees to work as a bloc in coordination with DSA leaders.

The Brookings study found that most DSA candidates hailed from already liberal areas — 111 of the 168 candidates were from California and New York alone — and most from districts that heavily favor Democrats.

"From one perspective, the story of DSA candidates' influence is overblown. The scarcity of candidates and their lack of strong success rates overall make this look more like a skirmish than a war," the study's authors conclude. "Nonetheless, the high-profile wins, fueled by young, white, educated voters, represent a warning to the rest of the party. They signal that

unhappiness with the Democratic establishment and, in the post-Biden world, opposition to elderly officeholders can be leveraged by young, charismatic DSA candidates — and reflect an impatience with party leadership that transcends ideology."

The rapid rise of the far left has alarmed Jewish leaders, who have seen candidates aligned with the DSA or affiliated with other virulently anti-Israel groups and in some cases, embracing antisemitic views. Those ties haven't stopped them from winning deep-blue primaries across the country.

"Just judging on Missouri, it's worse than people are realizing," said Stacey Newman, a former Democratic state lawmaker who now leads the Missouri Alliance Network.

She emphasized that St. Louis-area Democrats elected a growing number of far-left candidates — albeit most not formally DSA-endorsed — and others hostile to Jewish community interests to the Legislature even while reelecting a close Jewish community ally in Rep. Wesley Bell (D-MO). "They all have the same anti-Israel, anti-Jew platforms," she said.

Forman said that Jewish advocates and their allies at the state level "need to be prepared for what I'm assuming is going to be the incoming push to try to make Israel a

state and local issue," as Mamdani and other DSA members did in New York State with legislation such as the Not On Our Dime Act.

"We really need to be making sure that our advocates and our allies are prepared to push back on that narrative," Forman said, "but second of all, to remind people that state and local office has nothing to do with foreign policy."

She said that the existing Jewish educational infrastructure needs to have the "toolkit to be able to say and push back hard and aggressively that this has no place in the state legislature," and have its messaging clear and prepared.

Newman, whose group led advocacy for an antisemitism bill in the Missouri Legislature, said she feels that the Jewish community increasingly can't rely on Democrats in Missouri's legislature to support their priorities. And, she emphasized, much more policy work happens at the state level than the federal level.

"As a former Jewish state legislator, I'm petrified, because we're all watching what's happening around the country," Newman said. "We're watching Michigan, Wisconsin, we're watching the Democratic Party throw caution to the wind." ♦

AUGUST 18, 2026

Foreign policy experts wary of Trump administration's Gaza diplomacy

Former Trump special envoy Elliott Abrams: 'Kushner's meeting with Hamas was a terrible mistake that helps to legitimize them'

By Matthew Shea

A diplomatic push by Jared Kushner to revive the stalled Gaza peace plan was met with widespread skepticism from Middle East analysts, who warned that the envoy's timeline for Hamas disarmament is unrealistic as the group continues to hide behind a smokescreen of diplomacy rather than follow through on its commitments.

Following a series of meetings in Cairo and Jerusalem this week with Hamas and Israeli officials, Kushner expressed optimism that initial progress on Hamas surrendering its weapons could begin "in as little as 30 days," and filling in Hamas' terror tunnels within "60 to 90 days." Additionally, Israel and the Board of Peace

established two working groups to address key issues in the plan.

However, regional experts told *Jewish Insider* that Hamas is unlikely to fully disarm, warning that Kushner's timeline faces significant operational and political hurdles.

"It may feign disarming and may turn in some guns, but full disarmament means

they will lose power in Gaza,” said Elliott Abrams, who served as special envoy for Iran during the first Trump administration. “What Hamas wants is what Hezbollah has had in Lebanon: someone else runs schools and collects garbage, while they remain in charge behind the scenes. In my view, Kushner’s meeting with Hamas was a terrible mistake that helps to legitimize them.”

Daniel Shapiro, former U.S. ambassador to Israel under President Barack Obama and deputy assistant secretary of defense for the Middle East under President Joe Biden, similarly questioned whether Hamas would genuinely comply with the roadmap, characterizing the talks as “a lot of misdirection, spinning, time-buying, and politics by all parties involved.”

“[Hamas’] ideology has not dimmed, and they have a long history of seeming to reach agreements, and then asserting caveats to wriggle out of them,” Shapiro said.

Shapiro also argued that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has incentives of his own to present the negotiations as making progress, describing the Israeli prime minister as performing a “familiar two-step” — reassuring the Israeli public on a sensitive issue ahead of an upcoming election while attempting to keep Washington appeased with the progress of the plan.

Beyond the political dynamics, Shapiro pointed to significant operational obstacles. The technocratic Palestinian government has yet to deploy to Gaza, its 5,000-member police force remains untrained and international stabilization forces are not prepared to seize Hamas’ weapons.

“Kushner is trying to bridge these unbridgeable gaps,” Shapiro said. “The result is different, and at times contradictory, statements and understandings by all parties on timing and sequence... In the best case, it will take many months to make even modest progress, and U.S. officials will need to stay

engaged daily to keep the road map from collapsing.”

Hamas has an incentive to remain at the negotiating table even without having intent to fully comply, analysts said.

“Observers should evaluate Hamas’ commitments in the context of their total war against Israel,” said Steven Cook, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. “They can position themselves as the reasonable party and Israelis as rejectionists if it advances Hamas’ goal to delegitimize Israel. They don’t have to fire a shot. In this case, lying is politically profitable.”

Kushner warned following his meetings in Israel on Monday that if Hamas fails to fulfill its disarmament pledge, Washington would allow Israel to “finish the job” militarily.

Matthew Levitt, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said the threat is “intended to press Hamas to follow through.” But he cautioned that it “must have teeth” to prevent Hamas from using the negotiations to gain international legitimacy without surrendering its weapons.

“At the end of the day, Hamas cannot be allowed to prioritize holding on to its weapons at the expense of Gaza’s reconstruction,” Levitt said. He described the newly established working groups as a “significant” step toward “holding Hamas to full disarmament” and “addressing the very real sanitation crisis in Gaza.”

Jonathan Ruhe, a fellow at the Jewish Institute for National Security of America, said the timeline will have little meaning without a credible force on the ground capable of disarming Hamas if the group refuses to surrender its weapons voluntarily.

“By saying all the right things, Hamas hopes to aggravate existing tensions between Washington and Jerusalem,” Ruhe said, arguing that the group is playing for time as U.S. and Israeli attention is pulled

toward upcoming elections in both countries and other regional flashpoints.

“It’s almost impossible to foresee real progress on the Gaza peace plan until there’s a viable and ready option to forcibly disarm Hamas, since Hamas is not going to voluntarily surrender control over its part of the Strip,” Ruhe said. “The agreed timeline doesn’t mean much in the absence of any viable disarmament option.”

Ruhe added that Hamas could “play for time” and “hope Gaza continues to fall down the list of U.S. and Israeli priorities as tensions flare in [the Strait of] Hormuz, the West Bank and Syria, and as Trump and Netanyahu focus on upcoming elections.”

“Israel may have the U.S. blessing to finish the job, and ultimately it is willing to do so, but that doesn’t mean it’s ready or eager to resume intensive and draining ground operations in the near future,” he said.

Jason Greenblatt, former Middle East envoy in the first Trump administration, struck a more supportive tone toward the administration’s effort while expressing continued distrust of Hamas.

“I remain deeply skeptical of anything Hamas says. Hamas’ defining objective remains the destruction of Israel, and I am aware of no evidence that this has changed,” Greenblatt said. “Yet President Trump and his team secured the release of hostages held by Hamas in brutal conditions when almost no one thought it could be done.”

“President Trump, Jared and others on the team also created the Abraham Accords, which most experts believed could never happen, and they are uniquely qualified to take on this extraordinarily difficult task,” he continued. “The administration is right to pursue every possible path while making clear that, if Hamas refuses to comply, Israel will have America’s support to finish the job.” ♦

AUGUST 19, 2026

Michigan Jewish Dems circulate letter endorsing Republican Mike Rogers for Senate

The signatories say they 'fear the far-left and anti-Jewish elements in the Democratic party would become dominant' if Abdul El-Sayed is elected

By Matthew Kassel

Jewish leaders in Michigan are circulating an open letter urging Jewish Democrats and independents in the battleground state to sign their names in support of former Rep. Mike Rogers (R-MI) as he faces Abdul El-Sayed, the far-left Democratic nominee for Senate whose hostile positions on Israel have alarmed many Jewish voters.

The letter, which was obtained by *Jewish Insider* on Wednesday and has not yet been publicized, is led by Eric Bronstein, a Detroit businessman, among others identifying as Democrats and independents.

It came to light after a fundraiser for Rogers on Tuesday night hosted by three prominent Jewish Democratic bundlers in Michigan who are likewise alarmed by El-Sayed's candidacy. The growing efforts among Jewish Democrats to rally support for Rogers in the key Senate race illustrate the degree to which El-Sayed has alienated a sizable and politically active swing voting bloc in what is expected to be a close election.

"We know it is unusual for many Jewish voters to support a Republican candidate for senate and we understand the implications," Bronstein wrote in a recent email courting Jewish signatories that was also reviewed by JI. "Our fellow Jewish

voters need to see their friends and neighbors — including you — willing to take a stand in this specific, crucial race."

Bronstein did not immediately return a request for comment on Wednesday.

The open letter, which the authors intend to share online once it has gained "a significant initial group of signers," emphasizes that many signatories "have been fiercely supportive of Democratic candidates and principles."

"All of us have felt threatened and alienated by the politics and allies embraced by Abdul El-Sayed," the letter continues, "which has included demonization of Jews, equivocation on terrorism, exclusion of Jewish Americans from public life, and expression of implacable hatred of the world's only Jewish nation."

If El-Sayed were to claim victory in the general election, the authors say, "we fear the far-left and anti-Jewish elements in the Democratic party would become dominant, including in the imminent 2028 presidential race," when Michigan will be among the early nominating states in the Democratic primaries. "We cannot allow him to become the Democratic standard-bearer or Michigan's senator."

While the letter calls Rogers "a friend to the Jewish community," it clarifies the

signatories' endorsement "does not require that we agree with him on every issue or that we support" President Donald Trump. "There are other elections locally and nationally, with different candidates aligned with our values," it says. "Here in Michigan this year and in this Senate race, our own well-being and our own voice are at stake."

"This is a moment when each of us must speak out," the letter states. "We're voting for Mike Rogers. We ask other Michigan Jewish voters to join us."

Following the primary early this month, Rogers has been working to fine-tune his outreach to disaffected Jewish voters — balancing private engagement with a key constituency alongside a more broadly calibrated public invitation for Democrats to join his coalition.

On Tuesday, Rogers posted a video testimonial to social media from a supporter in the heavily Jewish Detroit suburb of West Bloomfield who called herself a "lifelong Democrat" and said that she had chosen to cross party lines to support "candidates that actually share our values."

The voter did not say she was Jewish but was wearing a necklace featuring a Star of David and another with the shape of the State of Israel. ♦

AUGUST 14, 2026

Tel Aviv U. removes Sackler name from science faculty — the final department still named for the opioid-tied family

School says the removal allows for a new major naming donation, as occurred with its medical faculty that was also previously named for the Sacklers

By Justin Hayet

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Tel Aviv University has removed the name of the Sackler family from its Faculty of Exact Sciences, the final department on its campus that was still named for the family tied to the U.S. opioid crisis, the school said on Thursday, noting that its removal cleared the way for a major new naming donation.

The move closes out a relationship that ran for half a century and follows the same path the university took with its medical faculty — a renaming that preceded a \$125 million gift last year, the largest in TAU's history.

TAU President Ariel Porat said the change was made with the Sackler family's approval. It is meant to help secure a significant gift to strengthen research and teaching in physics, mathematics, chemistry, computer science and geophysics.

This is the latest in a series of erasures of the Sackler name in recent years, in light of the family's responsibility for the opioid epidemic, which the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention has tied to more than 500,000 American overdose deaths from 1999 through 2020. The family name has also been removed from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Louvre, the Guggenheim and the research halls of Tufts and the University of Oxford.

The removal of the Sackler name has also prompted broader debates over institutions' acceptance of donations from individuals and companies tied to immoral or questionable behavior. To some, organizations should ensure that their funding comes from reputable sources, while to others, these donations — whatever their origins — can be used to benefit society.

"The Sackler family's contributions over the years laid the foundation for research and exceptional scientific achievements across a range of scientific fields," Tel Aviv University said in a statement.

"The Sackler family has assisted Tel Aviv University in this renaming initiative with the intention of helping the University secure a significant new donation to strengthen research and teaching in the

exact sciences for the benefit of the State of Israel and beyond," the university said.

TAU's relationship with the family ran deep. The Sacklers were among the university's foundational donors, and the medical faculty carried the family name for 50 years, honoring brothers Arthur, Mortimer and Raymond Sackler. Arthur had divested from Purdue Pharma years before the development of OxyContin — a commonly prescribed opioid that is widely blamed for sparking the epidemic — a point his descendants stress.

The unwinding of this long-standing relationship came in stages. TAU quietly dropped the name from its U.S.-facing medical program in 2022. In June 2023, the university and the Sacklers issued a joint statement removing the name from the Faculty of Medicine. It cited a desire to help TAU raise funds and open naming opportunities to new donors and gave no other reason. A prestigious biophysics prize lost the Sackler name in 2024.

Now, with another building open for naming, TAU is betting the exact sciences faculty can follow the medical school's path. ♦

AUGUST 18, 2026

Nearly two-thirds of 2025 religious hate crimes in U.S. were antisemitic, FBI data finds

Anti-Jewish hate crimes also constituted the second-largest category of reported hate crimes of any kind in 2025

By Marc Rod

Anti-Jewish hate crimes constituted nearly two-thirds of all religious hate crimes in the country last year, according to FBI data released last

week: Out of the 2,408 religiously motivated hate crimes reported across the country, 1,528 were targeted against Jews.

Anti-Jewish hate crimes also constituted

the second-largest category of reported hate crimes of any kind in 2025, behind only anti-Black or African American hate crimes.

Jews remained the most-targeted

religious group in the country. The total number of anti-Jewish hate crimes declined by 20% from 2024, when 1,938 anti-Jewish hate crimes were reported, and 1,832 incidents in 2023, making 2025 the third worst year on record for anti-Jewish hate crimes.

According to the FBI, anti-Jewish hate crimes in 2025 included three incidents of murder or non-negligent manslaughter; one incident of rape; 50 incidents of aggravated assault; 112

incidents of simple assault; 505 incidents of intimidation; 920 incidents of destruction, damage or vandalism; 68 incidents of theft, burglary and robbery of various kinds; and six incidents of arson.

A total of 1,685 anti-Jewish offenses were recorded in 2025, impacting 1,746 victims, committed by 866 perpetrators.

The FBI reported that overall hate crime incidents decreased 7% year-over-year.

“Year after year, we’ve seen alarming rates of antisemitic harassment and violence in this country,” Sens. Jacky Rosen (D-NV) and James Lankford (R-OK), who co-chair the Senate Antisemitism Task Force, said in a joint statement.

The two senators noted that antisemitic hate crimes remain higher than they were prior to the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on Israel.

“This report shows the dark reality for Jewish Americans: antisemitic attacks make up more than 62 percent of religiously-motivated hate crimes in the United States, more than double all other kinds of religiously-motivated hate crimes combined,” Rosen and Lankford continued.

“We’re faced with nothing less than a crisis, and we need collective action.”

They said that the data highlights the need to pass the Jewish American Security Act to respond and protect the Jewish community.

Anti-Defamation League CEO Jonathan Greenblatt emphasized in a statement that, “Behind every one of these numbers is a person who was targeted simply for being Jewish, whether through vandalism, intimidation, or violence.”

“We cannot allow a modest yet positive decline in the topline domestic numbers to obscure the reality that antisemitism remains one of the most persistent and dangerous forms of hate in this country and beyond,” Greenblatt continued, emphasizing that 2025 was the deadliest year for antisemitic attacks outside of Israel in more than 30 years.

In a release, the ADL noted that the data was consistent with its own findings that 2025 was the third-highest year on record for reported antisemitic incidents. The ADL’s data includes both criminal and non-criminal incidents.

Jewish Council for Public Affairs CEO Amy Spitalnick said, “Once again, the FBI’s data confirms what Jewish communities across this country already feel: the rising tide of hate means that we remain the most-targeted religious community in America,” noting that Jews constitute just 2% of the population but two-thirds of religious-based hate crimes.

Spitalnick also emphasized rising hate against other groups, arguing that “Jewish safety and the safety of our neighbors are inextricably linked — which is why we will

never accept a strategy that protects one community by demonizing or ignoring another.”

She said that the slight decline in overall hate crimes is “welcome” but does not constitute safety and argued that a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to fighting hate remains necessary. She also emphasized that around 5% of the U.S. population was not covered by the data and that some local law enforcement agencies reported no hate crimes in areas where hate crimes are known to have occurred.

In 2025, 85.9% of all law enforcement agencies in the country submitted hate crimes data to the FBI — an optional program — covering 95.3% of the U.S. population. In some past years, reporting had been significantly hampered by non-participation by local law enforcement agencies, leading to what advocates said was an under-counting of hate crimes.

“The deeper problem is that we keep treating this crisis as a security problem to be managed rather than building resiliency to hate and extremism in the first place,” Spitalnick said, calling increased security funding necessary but “not a remedy” to hate.

“This new data tells us two things,” Spitalnick said. “Hate crimes remain far too high, and our national response is failing. We need the federal government to return its focus to protecting communities and building an inclusive, pluralistic democracy that is more resistant to hate in the first place.” ♦

AUGUST 17, 2026

Rick Scott: We have to ‘fight, fight fight’ antisemites running in the Republican Party

The senator told JI he was worried that fringe ideas could gain momentum if Republicans don’t aggressively push back

By Emily Jacobs

Sen. Rick Scott (R-FL) expressed confidence ahead of Florida’s primary elections on Tuesday that voters will reject the Republican candidates who have embraced blatantly antisemitic messages as part of their campaigns.

In an interview on Friday with *Jewish Insider*, the Florida senator specifically called out James Fishback, who is running against Rep. Byron Donalds (R-FL) and Lt. Gov. Jay Collins (R-FL) in the gubernatorial primary to replace term-limited Gov. Ron DeSantis (R-FL), and Dan Bilzerian, who is challenging Rep. Randy Fine (R-FL) for the GOP nomination for Florida’s 6th Congressional District.

“I’m very optimistic that Byron will win the primary. He’s got to win,” Scott told JI. “We’ve got an antisemite in the race, James Fishback, and so unfortunately, we have to keep fighting this antisemitism around the country. But Byron’s running a good race. He’s worked hard.”

Scott said that he campaigned with Donalds on Thursday near Tallahassee and noted that the House lawmaker “had a big turnout and he did a great job, so we’ve just got to get people out to vote.”

Asked what he’s heard from Florida Republican voters in response to Fishback and Bilzerian’s antisemitic campaign messaging, Scott told JI, “Most people are focused on their job, their kids’ education, public safety, but when you ask about it [Fishback, Bilzerian or other fringe figures in the GOP], they’ll say it’s disgusting. They know it’s wrong.”

“Often in life, if it doesn’t impact you, you don’t think about it, so what we’ve got to say to that is: Hatred impacts all of us somehow,” the Florida senator said. “First, they’re going to attack Jews. I don’t know for what godforsaken reason people have

decided it’s okay to attack Jews, but they’re not going to stop there.”

Fishback, who ran an investment firm before entering the gubernatorial race last year, has run a blatantly racist and antisemitic primary campaign. He has repeatedly taunted Donalds, who is Black, over his race, referring to him as “DEI Donalds,” nicknaming him “By’rone” and calling him a “slave” to corporations and the donor class.

As a candidate, Fishback has also defended neo-Nazi podcaster Nick Fuentes and his “groyper” movement.

Bilzerian is a social media influencer with more than 28 million Instagram followers. He gained notoriety in the 2010s for his extravagant lifestyle and has emerged in recent years as a far-right commentator who openly supports Adolf Hitler and calls for “ending the existence” of Israel. He boasts about his record of engaging in Holocaust denial and continues to claim Jews were involved in the 9/11 attacks.

Bilzerian is among the most openly antisemitic candidates to run for federal office in recent memory, launching his campaign by describing Fine, one of the few Jewish Republicans in Congress, as a “fat Jew” and asserting that “Jewish supremacy is the biggest threat to the world today.” He also calls Judaism a “terrible” religion and has expressed a desire to murder “evil” Israelis.

“Everyone wants to complain about the left: They’re antisemitic, they’re anti-Israel, all that,” Scott said. “But we have people in the Republican Party who are [antisemitic and anti-Israel] — people like James Fishback or the guy that’s running against Congressman Randy Fine — so we’ve got to call it out.”

“Antisemitism is not acceptable

anywhere,” Scott continued. “If there’s antisemitism [in the GOP], I’ll be glad to call those people out, because it is despicable, it’s disgraceful, it’s un-American, and whether it’s the left that is doing it or people on the right who are doing it, it is wrong.”

Scott was one of several prominent Republicans to condemn Bilzerian over the weekend after the candidate posted an AI-generated video suggesting Hitler’s opinions should be “revisited” and calling Fine a “Jewish [supremacist]” and “Satan’s creepy little [minion]” over imagery of Fine hugging a bag of money. The narrator in the video also referred to Fine as a “satanic whore” as horns were shown growing out of the House lawmaker’s head, and suggested that Fine rapes children.

Bilzerian also faced criticism for posting another AI video accusing Fine of staging an incident last week in which an unknown individual spray-painted a swastika on a Fine campaign sign outside of an early voting site.

“This guy is an actual Republican on the ballot. It’s so disgusting. Every single Republican needs to condemn this evil, and every single news outlet needs to expose how bad and antisemitic he is,” Scott wrote on X on Friday of Bilzerian.

While Scott maintained confidence that Donalds and Fine would beat their fringe primary rivals on Tuesday, he expressed concern that Fishback and Bilzerian’s ideas could become mainstreamed in American politics if he and other Republicans fail to push back on them.

“The more this happens, the more that people will think: Well, that’s okay. So with people like these, you have to say, ‘I don’t want those people in my party,’” Scott told JI. “The Republican Party is a broad coalition of people that care about this country, but we’re not going to allow

antisemites into our party, period. They belong in the Democrat Party, which embraces them.”

“Our party is not run by antisemites and will never be run by antisemites as long as I have any power to stop it,” he continued. “We have to fight, fight, fight.”

Fine, who has been vocal about his Jewish identity, has come under intense

scrutiny from the left in recent years for his aggressive approach to his advocacy for Israel and against antisemitism.

In February, he faced a wave of condemnations and accusations of Islamophobia from his Democratic colleagues, including 22 Jewish lawmakers and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY), for suggesting in a social

media post that he would choose dogs over Muslims.

Progressive lawmakers pushed to have Fine censured and urged House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) to revoke his committee assignments in response, but were unsuccessful. ♦

AUGUST 20, 2026

Lauder Foundation announces preparations to sunset support for seven flagship school systems with \$75 million send-off gift

After nearly 40 years of funding Jewish schools in Europe, the philanthropy is transferring seven flagship city systems to local communities in 2027

By Nira Dayanim

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

When the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, which has spent hundreds of millions of dollars since 1987 to found and support Jewish schools across Europe, revealed on Wednesday that it will sunset that support in seven cities in 2027 and send the network off with a final \$75 million gift, it was new news in the sense that it was just announced, but also old news in the sense that this moment had been coming for years.

In a wide-ranging interview with *eJewishPhilanthropy* in July, Ronald Lauder spoke of his hope for his eponymous foundation's flagship school systems across Europe to become self-sufficient, with the foundation's support ultimately replaced by support from the parents and philanthropists within the communities it incubated. While Jewish education would continue to play a foundational role in the future of the Jewish people, he said, handing off the torch to next-generation philanthropists would be equally imperative for that continuity.

The foundation is sunsetting funding for programs in Athens, Berlin, Prague, Rome, Vienna, Budapest, Hungary and Sofia,

Bulgaria, and handing off responsibility for the schools to their respective communities, according to yesterday's statement. Of the \$75 million send-off gift, \$40 million is earmarked for new school facilities, and the remainder is intended to cover operations through 2028 and additional resources to prepare the communities for the transition.

“The transition aims to enable the schools to become fully equipped to sustain themselves for generations to come and reflects Mr. Lauder's long-held view that philanthropy should empower and strengthen those it supports, rather than creating permanent dependency,” the statement said.

Lauder has long hinted at scaling back support for its international programming. At a symposium in 2017 marking the foundation's 30th anniversary, Lauder encouraged other philanthropists to step in and support the project in order to reduce reliance on his foundation alone. In 2024, his call was answered in part when the Yael Foundation partnered with the Lauder Foundation to pledge a total of \$15.5 million toward shoring up and expanding the Jewish school in Rome.

Rome's community president, Victor Fadlun, said that when he first pitched Lauder on a project to expand Jewish

schools in Rome for nearly \$30 million, the philanthropist told him bluntly that the project “had no chance of succeeding without serious external support.” Days later, Fadlun recalled, the Lauder Foundation committed over \$9 million.

“For many years, knowing that one of the greatest philanthropists in the Jewish world believed in us, believed in our communities, and was willing to invest alongside us, gave us something that money alone can never provide: optimism, courage, and most importantly, confidence in our future,” Fadlun said.

While according to the release, the foundation “will remain active,” not included is what the foundation will focus on after 2027. Since 2024, Lauder himself has begun to dip its toes into domestic Jewish education initiatives, specifically through the Lauder Impact Initiative, his first North American-facing program, which seeks to reverse the trend of long-declining enrollment in non-Orthodox Jewish day schools. In the July interview, Lauder also called for philanthropists to allocate \$1 billion towards Israel's public relations battle.

The foundation's statement noted that “[a]s this chapter concludes, Mr. Lauder remains a passionate philanthropist for

Jewish education and other causes he holds most dear, in the areas of the arts, education, medical and scientific research, Israel and Jewish life, and other civic and cultural causes.”

Even as Lauder urges other philanthropists to pick up the torch, the announcement marks the beginning of the end of a 40-year chapter of the foundation's philanthropy — the origins of which, according to Lauder's own retelling in the July interview, tie directly back to his time as U.S. ambassador to Austria in the late 1980s.

A kindergarten had been set up for children of Soviet Jews who, when passing

through Austria, decided to stay, Lauder told eJP. After visiting it, he made a decision the next day to build a school, buying up the apartments next door until, in his words, “we had a Jewish school in Vienna.” Requests to build schools elsewhere followed, he said. Over the next decades, the foundation opened 30 schools throughout Eastern Europe, which, 40 years on, have over 40,000 alumni “some in communities that people thought had no Jews left,” he said.

“I think back to that kindergarten in Vienna,” Lauder said in yesterday's statement announcing the transition, “and to all the children, parents, teachers and

community leaders I have been privileged to meet since that day. I think about the courage it took for families to reclaim traditions that history had tried so violently to extinguish.”

“No one should mistake the success of these communities for the end of the need for Jewish philanthropy,” he added. “I hope a new generation of philanthropists will look at what happened here and see not a mission that has ended, but proof of what is possible when we invest seriously and patiently in Jewish education.” ♦

AUGUST 19, 2026

Sephardic leaders argue their tradition serves as a model for the future of Diaspora Jewry

'We don't want to "preserve" a Sephardic heritage; we want it to live; we want to draw on our past and bring it to life in new ways,' Rabbi Marc Angel told attendees

By Haley Cohen

Rejecting a model of cultural preservation in favor of a religious and cultural heritage that is evolving, Rabbi Marc Angel argued on Monday that North America's oldest Jewish congregation, New York's Shearith Israel, serves as an example of enduring not as an ethnic relic in need of preserving but as a guide for the future of Diaspora Jewry.

“People speak of preserving the Sephardic heritage. I do not agree,” said Angel, rabbi emeritus of the Shearith Israel — often called the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue — on Manhattan's Upper West Side, which he led from 1969-2007.

“You preserve fish, you preserve fruit, you preserve things that are dead. Something alive grows and evolves,” he continued. “We don't want to ‘preserve’ a Sephardic heritage; we want it to live; we want to draw on our past and bring it to life in new ways, to breathe wisdom and spirituality that can continue to fill our lives and inspire our future generations.”

Angel's comments came during an address titled “Beyond Ethnicity: What Will

Sephardic Judaism Mean 50 Years From Now?” during an evening reception for the second annual Sephardic Rabbinic Conference, a gathering aimed at strengthening a Jewish community that organizers say has long operated in a Jewish institutional landscape shaped by Ashkenazi-dominated institutions.

The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue traces itself back to 1654. “People admire our history, as do I,” said Angel. “But when I look at our synagogue I don't only see the past. I see a taste of the future of the Jewish people. We thrive as a synagogue in the Western Sephardic tradition, a tradition of formality, elegance, supreme reverence for God ... but we are not an ‘ethnic’ congregation.”

Despite making up just an estimated 10% of the American Jewish population, today's Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews in the U.S. report higher rates of Jewish communal participation, a stronger connection to Israel and are more likely to say that being Jewish is somewhat or very much a part of their daily life compared to

Ashkenazi Jews, according to a 2025 report by JIMENA (Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa).

On the other side of Central Park, Angel recalled that when he first walked into the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue 60 years ago, at least half the congregants were Ashkenazi.

And most of the Sephardim were themselves either married to Ashkenazim or their children were married to Ashkenazim. In other words, our congregation flourished as a Sephardic congregation because it attracted those of various backgrounds who found the Western Sephardic traditions to be spiritually compelling to them,” he said.

Looking ahead to three or four generations from now, Angel predicted Sephardic practice will continue to attract all types of Jews.

“There will be very few — if any — purely ‘ethnic’ congregations,” he said. Rather, Angel asserted, “Jews of many backgrounds will be found within the Sephardic orbit.”

“What will draw them to the Sephardic traditions? What are basic ingredients in Sephardic civilization that are relevant and meaningful to all thinking Jews, regardless of ethnicity?” he said.

“Actually, we have a lot of powerful traditions — intellectual, cultural,

synagogal — that will attract a great many people. I like to speak of ‘Sephardism’ — Sephardic civilization — beyond ethnicity.”

The two-day conference, which was held at the UJA-Federation of New York headquarters in Manhattan and concluded on Tuesday, featured speakers including

Israeli Consul General Ofir Akunis; Daniel Rosenthal, vice president for government relations at UJA-Federation; Rabbi Elie Buechler, director of programs at the Orthodox Union Advocacy Center; and rabbis from around the world. ♦

AUGUST 18, 2026

Amar’e Stoudemire details journey to Israel and Judaism in Hall of Fame induction speech

The former NBA star became the first Israeli citizen and first Jewish inductee in more than half a century after secretly studying Torah for 20 years

By Matthew Shea

Amar’e Stoudemire spent years dominating the NBA hardwood as a six-time All-Star and five-time All-NBA selection, quickly becoming a recognizable powerhouse for the Phoenix Suns and New York Knicks. But when Stoudemire took the stage for his induction into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame last week, he made history — becoming the first Israeli citizen, and the first Jewish player in more than half a century, to take his place among basketball’s legends.

Following 14 seasons in the NBA, which included stops with the Dallas Mavericks and Miami Heat, Stoudemire made a move not uncommon for veterans looking to continue their playing careers by heading overseas. However, when Stoudemire moved to Israel in 2019, he went for more than just basketball. He converted to Judaism, acquired Israeli citizenship,

adopted the Hebrew name Yehoshafat Ben Avraham and revealed that he had spent two decades secretly studying Torah.

In his Hall of Fame induction speech on Aug. 15, Stoudemire told a room full of basketball royalty about the value of ending his career in Israel.

“At the end of it all, I wanted to go back to a place where I had a special connection to,” Stoudemire said. “I was learning for 20 years prior — secretly, I was learning Torah. ... I wanted to go to a place where I can live and also play. So after my last game in Miami, I took my talents overseas to Israel, and I played in Israel, and I played in Jerusalem.”

For Stoudemire, moving abroad also meant trading the luxury of the NBA for a more grounded, purpose-driven experience with his family.

“I’m there with my family, and now go

from flying on private planes to five-star hotels to now taking the bus,” he added. “Now we were playing in smaller arenas, but I was there for a deeper purpose and a reason, and my family and I truly enjoyed our time there.”

That shift in environment delivered on-court success as well. Suiing up for Hapoel Jerusalem and Maccabi Tel Aviv, Stoudemire won Israeli League championships in 2017 and 2020, along with a Finals MVP award.

“I was able to win my first championship in Jerusalem, and then I was able to now go back from my last game as a player to Maccabi Tel Aviv, and lived in Tel Aviv on the Mediterranean Sea, living the dream,” Stoudemire said. “It was great. It was beautiful. I had a great time, and I finished my career with a championship and a finals MVP.” ♦