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**HIGHLIGHTS**

**Congress mandates Holocaust education in grades K-12; science and math requirements to be dropped. New legislation would also replace arts and crafts in senior citizens' homes with workshops on Holocaust denial.**

## Shoah education aim of federal bill

Funding for legislation could provide curriculum guidelines and training for educators

07.27.2007 | [The Jewish Advocate](#)  
By Kristin Erekson

With more than 62 years having passed since the Shoah, local and state lawmakers are working to give Holocaust education a boost.

Currently being reviewed by committees in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate, the Simon Wiesenthal Holocaust Education Assistance Act – if passed – would provide select organizations nationwide with competitive grants to be used to develop Holocaust curriculum guides as well as training for teachers.

The act would distribute \$10 million – \$2 million yearly for five years – in federal funding to establish these programs, according to Newtonville resident Rosian Zerner, a Holocaust survivor from Lithuania who is supporting the bill. The U.S. Secretary of Education determines the recipients of the funds and the amounts of the awards.

"Massachusetts should be at the forefront of this legislation," said Zerner, who has been fervently sending out letters and meeting with legislators to garner more support for the act. "Holocaust education is important because it not only stands as a symbol of what should not be repeated in history but it is also necessary at a point where there are so many Holocaust deniers."

Upon receiving a letter from Zerner, Congressman Barney Frank (D-Mass.) decided earlier this month to become a co-sponsor of the bill. Frank said he is "doing this for the world."

"The more you learn about things, the better it is to make sure you avoid anything like it," Frank added

U.S. Senator Robert Menendez, who is the author of the bill in the Senate, told the Advocate in an e-mail that the Holocaust Education Assistant Act is needed now more than ever because there are some who still deny "the Holocaust's very existence."

Menendez, along with other lawmakers, found it fitting to name the bill after the late Simon Wiesenthal, a survivor of the Nazi death camps who dedicated his life to documenting the crimes of the Holocaust and to hunting down the perpetrators still at large. The act has no connection with the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Menendez said.

"I believe this legislation will be an important step to ensuring that students continue to learn about the Holocaust in an accurate and comprehensive manner," Menendez added.

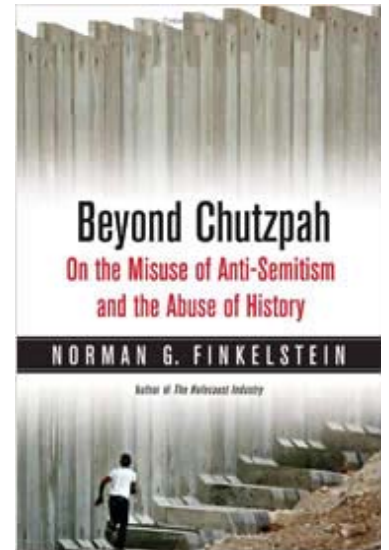
According to the text of the act, several states, such as California, Florida and Illinois, now mandate Holocaust education in curricula. However, Heidi P. Guarino, spokeswoman for the state Department of Education, said Massachusetts does not exactly "mandate" the teaching of the Shoah.

Instead, Guarino added, the Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework dedicates one world history learning standard to the Holocaust, as well as another addressing the creation of the state of Israel in 1948.

If the bill is passed, Guarino said that it will "spur a very intense effort on the development of teaching units and other materials on this subject."

Alan Ronkin, deputy director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston, told the Advocate that teaching about the Holocaust is "critical to shape the next generation."

Added Ronkin: "Holocaust education not only teaches about the past, but it also uses the lessons of the past to help shape students' decisions to become future leaders [who fight] against racism, bigotry and anti-Semitism."



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