



## Jewish community leaders participate in annual Springfield Mission

**By Suzanne Strassberger**

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Forty-four Board members and professional leaders from the Jewish United Fund/ Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, and the Government Affairs Committee and CJE Senior Life, Jewish Child and Family Services, Jewish Vocational Service, KESHET, and Sinai Health Systems participated in the annual Springfield Mission on April 18-19.

Said Ann-Louise Kleper, Chair of the Government Affairs Committee of the Jewish Federation, "It would be easy to become immobilized by despair during these dreadful times for our agencies. We have no choice, however, but to persevere and I can't image a more knowledgeable and committed group to lobby with in Springfield."

These are sobering times. The Governor has challenged the legislature to find \$2.7 billion in reductions in the Medicaid program or else find the reductions elsewhere in the budget. Medicaid is a major source of government funding for Jewish Federation agencies.

Members of the Mission met privately with Senate President Cullerton, Senate Republican leader Radogno, House Majority Leader Barbara Flynn Currie and House Republican Leader Cross, in addition to small group meetings with other legislators.

They also met for more than an hour with Department of Health and Family Services Director Julie Hamos. Director of the Department on Aging John Holton spoke to the group at lunch.

In the evening, the legislators who call themselves the "Jewish Caucus" - Representatives Daniel Biss, Sara Feigenholtz, Robyn Gabel, Lou Lang, Karen May and Elaine Nekritz and Senators Susan Garrett, Jeff Schoenberg and Ira Silverstein - joined the Mission participants for dinner at the Governor's Mansion. (Rep. Kelly Cassidy was detained in an Appropriations Committee meeting.) Director Hamos and Senior Advisor to the Governor Michael Gelder, Secretary of Human Services Michelle Saddler, Deputy Governor Crystal Thomas, and Director of Revenue Brian Hammer joined the group as well.

Retiring legislators Senator Susan Garret, Rep. Karen May, and Senator Jeff Schoenberg were honored by their colleagues and constituents.

Thursday morning, Governor Pat Quinn spoke at the statewide commemoration of Yom HaShoah at the Old State Capital, an event co-sponsored by the Office of the Governor and the seven Jewish Federations of Illinois. Sisters Mrs. Rose Abrams and Mrs. Edith Adlam brought tears to the eyes of many in the audience as they remembered their days of survival in France. Rep. Daniel Biss and Ann-Louise Kleper spoke about the importance of remembering.

Boarding the bus home on Thursday, the leader of the Mission, Fran Levy, Vice Chair of Government Affairs and Chair of the State Government Affairs took a moment to reflect. "This was my first trip. It was a powerful experience. I see now how important it is to go down with a unified voice and meet with leaders from all four caucuses and the Governor's office. On this trip, each leader named the causes for the budget problem- and they were each different... as were the solutions. It is hard to see what the end game will be but I know we made an impact. We were very clear about the importance of saving Mt. Sinai as a safety net hospital and about making budget decisions based on data, not just historical spending patterns."