

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8023

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Financial Services, Insurance & Housing, February 3, 2004

Brief Description: Requesting that funds be promptly disbursed to Holocaust survivors.

Sponsors: Senators Kline, Jacobsen, Horn, Benton, West, Regala, Kohl-Welles, Prentice, Rasmussen and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Financial Services, Insurance & Housing: 2/3/04 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES, INSURANCE & HOUSING

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Joint Memorial No. 8023 be substituted therefor, and the substitute joint memorial do pass.

Signed by Senators Benton, Chair; Winsley, Vice Chair; Berkey, Keiser, Murray, Prentice and Roach.

Staff: Lilah Amos (786-7429)

Background: Over 60 years ago, Nazi Germany murdered six million Jews as part of a systematic program of genocide which is known as the "Holocaust." There are 174,000 Holocaust survivors in the United States, many of whom are elderly, infirm, and living in poverty. Two hundred of the survivors live in Washington.

Entities such as Swiss banks and insurance companies have provided significant funds to pay insurance claims made by Holocaust survivors for policies in effect at the time of the Holocaust and to provide humanitarian funds to the survivors through an international commission. Concern exists that available funds are not being distributed to Holocaust survivors in a timely manner, and that it may soon be too late to help elderly survivors, many of whom desperately need the funds to provide food, shelter, medical care, and home care.

The Washington Insurance Commissioner holds a seat on the International Holocaust Task Force of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) and supervises the Washington Holocaust Survivors Assistance Office.

Summary of Substitute Bill: It is requested that humanitarian and discretionary funds be promptly disbursed to Holocaust survivors in order to meet their current and anticipated basic needs in fair proportion to their numbers worldwide. It is also requested that the Washington State Insurance Commissioner utilize his position on the NAIC International Holocaust Task Force to further the goals of this memorial.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill was not considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: Because many Holocaust victims are in failing health and are unable to pay for necessary medical care, home care, and basic living expenses, the Humanitarian funds designated for Holocaust survivors should be promptly paid. It is critical that justice be afforded to Holocaust survivors before their death. This official request from the Washington Legislature is an important statement of support for Holocaust survivors and emphasizes the need for immediate attention to this continuing humanitarian crisis.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Adam Kline, prime sponsor; Remy Trupin, Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle; Fred Taucher, Survivors of the Holocaust Asset Recovery Project; Don Armstrong, Jewish Family Service of Seattle.