

SENATOR BECCA RAUSCH

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SENATE PASSES GENOCIDE EDUCATION BILL

Establishes the Genocide Education Trust Fund to educate students on the history of genocide.

(BOSTON—8/3/2020) The Massachusetts State Senate on Thursday, July 30, 2020, passed *An Act concerning genocide education* to educate middle and high school students on the history of genocide and to promote the teaching of human rights issues.

“As the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor, genocide education legislation is personal for me,” said **Senator Becca Rausch (D – Needham)**. “We are in a difficult moment in this country, as our nation and our Commonwealth grapple with significant upticks in blatant demonstrations of hate. Hate leads to devastation and destruction. We combat hate and ignorance with education and meaningful dialogue. I am proud and grateful that the Senate passed the genocide education bill today, and particularly grateful to Senator Rodrigues for his leadership and compassion.”

“To forge a more just future, our next generation must be educated on the tragic history of the Holocaust and other instances of genocide,” stated **Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland)**. “The importance of this bill cannot be overstated, and I say this as a Jewish woman and the daughter of a World War II veteran who helped liberate the victims of Nazi concentration camps. I am very thankful to Senators Rodrigues, Lewis and Creem for their advocacy on this issue and my colleagues for their unanimous support.”

“Seventy-five years after the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi death camp, we, as a society, continue to grapple with the root causes of hatred and discrimination. With the passage of this bill today, we take a critically important step to ensuring our students are educated on the Holocaust, the grave mistakes of the past, and stand ready to root out the injustices of the future,” said **Senator Michael J.**

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Rodrigues (D-Westport), Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. “As the forces of fake news, division, and ignorance continue to march on, I applaud Senate President Spilka and my colleagues in the Senate for standing up to say that we will never forget the lessons of the past. I also thank my constituent, Dr. Ron Weisberger, and the advocates for their urgent efforts to ensure we use the power of education to address hate, broaden public awareness, and shape our collective future.”

According to a 2018 article in the New York Times, 31% of Americans and 41% of millennials believe 2 million Jews or fewer were murdered in the Holocaust while 41% of Americans and 66% of millennials do not know what Auschwitz is. This bill would establish a Genocide Education Trust Fund to promote and educate middle and high school students on the history of genocide. Funds in this trust would be used to encourage the instruction of middle and high school students on the history of genocide and ensure the development of curricular materials, as well as to provide professional development training to assist educators in the teaching of genocide.

“It is shocking how many young people today have never heard of the Auschwitz concentration camp, the Holocaust, or other heinous genocides perpetrated in the past,” said **Senator Jason Lewis (D-Winchester), Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Education.** “This important legislation will ensure that more students understand the history of genocide so that it never happens again. I’m grateful to Senator Rodrigues for championing this legislation and to all of the educators and advocates who have worked to see this bill passed.”

“Students need to be educated about the causes of genocide if we are to ensure that history is not repeated,” said **Majority Leader Senator Cynthia Stone Creem (D-Newton).** “Learning about the paths that various societies and cultures have taken—from bigotry and hatred all the way to expulsion and genocide—will help future generations avoid this tragedy.”

"Thanks to Chairman Rodrigues for his leadership on a matter of importance - ensuring that students in our state learn about these horrific events so that our society can be better equipped to prevent anything like them from happening again, and sensitive to the impacts they have had on victims throughout history. Our caucus is pleased to join with all of our colleagues in this legislative effort," said **Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R - Gloucester).** "By having opportunities to learn about these events of the past students will be enriched, better informed, and more able to reject hatred and intolerance."

“We congratulate Senate President Spilka, Senate Ways and Means Chair Rodrigues, and our partners in government for coming together to ensure that students in our state will learn invaluable lessons about the consequences of hate and bigotry, from the most painful parts of our history,” said **Aaron Agulnek, Director of Government Affairs for the Jewish Community Relations Council.** *“We cannot simply say*

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'Never Again' if we do not also commit to educating the next generation by giving them the resources they need to recognize and stand up to injustice before it takes root."

*"We appreciate the leadership of Senate President Spilka, Senate Ways and Means Chair Rodrigues, and their legislative colleagues for taking a critical step toward ensuring that Massachusetts public school students receive Holocaust and genocide education prior to high school graduation," said **Robert Trestan, ADL New England Regional Director**. "The need for Holocaust and genocide education in K-12 schools could not be more urgent. Massachusetts now has an opportunity to use the power of education to address hate through this essential initiative for Holocaust and genocide education in the Commonwealth."*

The bill requires each school district to annually file a description of their lesson plan and programs related to genocide education with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The bill also establishes a competitive grant program that schools and districts can apply to for additional programming support.

An Act concerning genocide education now moves to the Massachusetts House of Representatives for consideration.

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Senator Becca Rausch represents the Norfolk, Bristol and Middlesex District, comprised of Attleboro, Franklin, Millis, Natick, Needham, Norfolk, North Attleborough, Plainville, Sherborn, Wayland, Wellesley, and Wrentham. Currently in her first term, Senator Rausch serves as the Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government and the Senate Vice Chair of the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs.