



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Elaine Phillips

Actions Are Stronger Than Words-Senate Takes a Stand Against Hate

ELAINE PHILLIPS March 16, 2017

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By Senator Elaine Phillips

Actions are stronger than words.

That's why the State Senate recently passed legislation to prevent our tax dollars from being used to support anti-Semitism or fund attacks against Israel. I was proud to sponsor both bills.

Threats against the Jewish community have been happening at an alarming rate here on Long Island and throughout the rest of the state and country. Whether it's bomb threats, cemetery desecration or spray-painting swastikas, these cowardly acts are aimed at scaring and intimidating people of the Jewish faith. Hate of this kind, against Jewish people or anyone else, is abhorrent and disgraceful.

Leaders on all sides have rightfully spoken out against these acts, and the Senate voted to raise the penalties for the individuals who commit them. But New York must also ensure that it does not financially support entities who target Israel and promote hate against the Jewish people.

The first bill would prohibit the State from doing business with entities that engage in or promote the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement or similar boycotts against Israel and other American allies. BDS aims to cripple the Israeli economy in protest of Israel's domestic security policies. In short, it's an economic war against one of our closest allies and the Middle East's only democracy. And it's not something that a state which is home to one of the world's largest Jewish populations outside of Israel should be supporting with taxpayer dollars.

The second bill would strip state funding from student groups at New York's public colleges if they engage in or promote hate speech, discrimination or boycotts like BDS. Reports have noted a number of anti-Semitic threats and incidents against Jewish students and faculty at CUNY campuses allegedly perpetrated by a radical student organization. This is the same group that annually holds an "Israel Apartheid Week" on campuses across the country, where Israeli soldiers have been depicted as Nazis. That goes far beyond simply voicing public policy concerns. It promotes hate.

Their harassment and intimidation of Jewish students across the country is so prevalent that the Great Neck community actually held an educational forum last year for local students entering college to prepare them for it. Hearing the stories firsthand from students, parents and community leaders at the event, and subsequently in other communities around the district, was one of the reasons I sponsored this legislation.

No one should walk anywhere in New York State and feel threatened because of their religion, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, most especially at higher education institutions which rightfully promote and encourage diversity and tolerance.

Free speech is a constitutional right, no matter how objectionable the message. Government

funding to support that speech is not. The Assembly must join the Senate in sending the message that we stand with Israel and will not tolerate hate or anti-Semitism.