



Advocacy Update

Sent January 13, 2011

Tragic Attack in Arizona

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Representative Gabrielle Giffords and the other victims who were shot and we mourn for the six people, including a nine year-old girl, who lost their lives, and send our condolences to their families.

Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, a representative from Arizona, members of her staff, and local residents were shot on Saturday morning, January 8, by a gunman who fired on Ms. Giffords and the constituents with whom she was meeting at a “Congress on Your Corner” event outside a Tucson area supermarket.

In a moving statement issued in response to the Saturday attack against Rep. Giffords and those meeting with her, Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, spoke of her as a remarkable public servant, willing to take stands on difficult and controversial issues. “She is a leading advocate for sensible immigration reform, a strong and thoughtful voice on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and is willing to cast difficult votes on issues she believes in, including health care reform. (It was her support for health care reform, which led to an earlier attack on her office in Tucson.)”

We share with you Rabbi Saperstein’s closing words:

“As we can see from today's bloodshed, to call for 'civility,' only begins to scratch the surface of what is needed. We are committed to working with America's religious leaders of all faiths, and others, to elevate aggressively the state of our political discourse.”

“But today, of course, we stand stunned and deeply saddened. And we pray that Rep. Giffords' husband Mark and her entire family find support comfort and strength among their friends and family, as we join them in praying for her full recovery.”

In Memory of Debbie Friedman

Debbie Friedman’s death on Sunday, this week, is a great loss to WRJ, the Reform Movement, and the Jewish world. Debbie generously shared her enormous talent, passion, and warmth with WRJ at our assemblies and through her beautiful songs. Debbie will long continue to be with us in her music and the liturgy she created which are so much part of our worship and programming.

The Union for Reform Judaism has developed a [Debbie Friedman tribute page](#) that provides a wide variety of resources to enable our community to “remember and celebrate Debbie’s incredible life.” It includes:

- A webcast of the funeral;
- Donation link to the Deborah Lynn Friedman Memorial Fund;
- Tributes from fans and followers of Debbie's. Individuals or groups can submit entries of videos, images or text to be placed on the map of remembrances;
- Blog essays, thoughts from leaders of the Movement, news clips; and

For more information on WRJ and Social Justice, visit www.wrj.org/social-justice-home

- The tribute video of Debbie being presented with the Alexander M. Schindler Distinguished Service Award at the 2007 URJ Biennial.

URJ President Rabbi Eric Yoffie wrote that "Debbie Friedman was an extraordinary treasure of our movement and an individual of great influence. Twenty-five years ago, North American Jews had forgotten how to sing. Debbie reminded us how to sing, she taught us how to sing. She gave us the vehicles that enabled us to sing. Then she impacted our youth and our camps and, ultimately, from there she impacted our synagogues. What happens in the synagogues of Reform Judaism today -- the voices of song -- are in large measure due to the insight, brilliance and influence of Debbie Friedman."

While we are deeply saddened by Debbie's passing, for WRJ, the role and significance of her music will be ever ongoing. May Debbie's memory be for a blessing and may her family be comforted by the joy and peace she brought to all of us.