

September 15, 2026

Dear Rep. Claudia Tenney (NY),

The Zionist Organization of America, the oldest and one of the largest pro-Israel organizations in the United States, strongly endorses and thanks you for your Fort Ontario Holocaust Refugee Shelter National Historical Park Establishment Act.

The Fort Ontario Holocaust Refugee Shelter National Historical Park Establishment Act (H.R. 1031) would establish a new historical park in Oswego, New York. This park would help preserve the nationally significant story of the 982 Jewish refugees who sheltered at Fort Ontario during World War II. The legislation builds on the National Park Service's 2024 Special Resource Study, which found that the refugee-shelter resources meet all four statutory tests for inclusion in the National Park System: national significance, suitability, feasibility, and the need for direct NPS management. Ultimately, the legislation would establish a new National Historical Park consisting of the parts of Fort Ontario that housed the Jewish refugees, consisting of 2.5 acres.

The Fort Ontario military complex dates back to the early 1840s. During World War II, Fort Ontario was placed under U.S. Army control, and it became the only emergency refugee camp for European Jews fleeing the Holocaust. From August 1944 until February 1946, Fort Ontario housed 982 mostly Jewish refugees from Europe, most of whom went on to become American citizens.

This bipartisan legislation is sponsored by Reps. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and Tom Suozzi (D-NY) in the House.

Unfortunately, today, the United States and the world are experiencing the worst wave of antisemitism since the Holocaust. Even before the barbaric attacks on peaceful Israeli communities occurred on October 7, 2023, antisemitism was a major problem on our college campuses, in our cities, and even in the halls of the U.S. Congress. Since then, the problem has gotten exponentially worse. Right now, antisemitic attacks have exploded in number and virulence in many of our major cities, most especially in New York City, where the Jew-hating radical Muslim Zohran Mamdani inspires the attackers.

Legislation like the Fort Ontario Holocaust Refugee Shelter National Historical Park Establishment Act is important because it helps to educate Americans about the increasing need to combat Jew-hatred. As the years go by, there are fewer and fewer Holocaust survivors left to share their stories, so it is critical that we preserve historical testaments to the Holocaust, like this park, for future generations to learn from.

ZOA enthusiastically salutes Rep. Tenney for her strong leadership in the House of Representatives in proposing this bill and getting a large coalition to support it. We hope for its swift passage.

Morton A. Klein
President
Zionist Org. of America (ZOA)