

FROM: THE JEWISH UNITED FUND OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO
One South Franklin Street - 60606 - 346-6700
Harold B. Rosen, Director of Public Relations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Zan Skolnick

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Raymond Epstein, Chairman of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) of the Jewish United Fund today (Feb. 23) responded with disappointment to a U.S. District Court ruling that would allow a Nazi march in Skokie, a suburb with a large population of Jews, many of them survivors of the Holocaust.

Epstein, who heads the coalition of Chicago's 34 major Jewish groups, said that he hoped the Village of Skokie -- and others seeking legal remedies to halt the proposed march by the National Socialist Party of America -- would "pursue every legal means to block this perversion of the rights of free speech."

Skokie resident and Holocaust survivor Sol Goldstein, who has initiated a private suit against the Nazis, affirmed Epstein's point of view, saying: "The Village of Skokie should do everything in its power to protect the safety and welfare of its residents."

Epstein said: "It would be a monstrous travesty for the courts of this land to rule that an obscene spectacle should be held under the guise of our First Amendment freedoms, which we, of the Jewish community, hold especially dear.

"The Jewish community of Chicago hopes that the Village of Skokie will continue its efforts to overturn the decision of the U.S. District Court that would enable the Nazis to deliberately provoke the citizens of Skokie and the many others who would be grievously offended by the march.

"However, should all legal means fail, the Jewish community will cooperate fully with the Village of Skokie and peoples of other faiths in framing a non-violent response more in keeping with what our founding fathers had in mind when they drafted the Bill of Rights," said Epstein.

Goldstein said he welcomed the expression of solidarity made yesterday by Governor James R. Thompson. "His interest and concern is one of many important indications that this march has become an issue for all Americans. We shall certainly call upon the Governor's good offices in framing our response to the march in the event of that unfortunate necessity."

Goldstein, who heads a PAC Committee on Individual Liberty and Jewish Security, had received a letter from Governor Thompson earlier in the week, expressing the Governor's feelings that "... survivors of the Holocaust ... and millions of Jews the world over ... should not be subjected to such a disgusting display as that march."

Referring to mounting offers of support from non-Jewish groups, Goldstein said: "There are many people in this country who remember that in addition to the 6 million Jews slaughtered during the Holocaust, 5 million Christian civilians were exterminated and 190,000 American soldiers lost their lives fighting the Nazi war machine."

Today's U.S. District Court ruling declared "unconstitutional" three Skokie ordinances that would (1) ban the wearing of military-style uniforms repugnant to the residents of Skokie, (2) require parade sponsors to post a \$350,000 bond if more than 50 spectators or participants are expected, and (3) ban dissemination of material that could incite hatred of a race or religion.

Goldstein's suit seeks a permanent injunction against the Nazi march on the grounds that it would cause "severe emotional and physical stress" among the estimated 7,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors living in Skokie. The suit was rejected by the Illinois Supreme Court without a hearing, but a second motion for a hearing will be filed tomorrow (Feb. 24), Goldstein said.

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