

Protecting Religious Freedom

___Do we take full advantage of our religious freedoms?

___Are we active members of our synagogues? Given the opportunity to develop a spiritual life in accordance with our own religious tradition, do we take time out for *Shabbat*?

___Do we take advantage of the rich supply of kosher food available in our communities? Do we send our children to the increasing number of Jewish day schools and youth groups?

___Blessed with a state that is indeed separate from church, do we actively work to ensure that this state of affairs is not threatened?

___Are we vigilant in speaking out against judicial decisions and legislative programs that threaten our ability to practice our religion freely -- or that tend to establish the teachings of another religion as the law of the land?

When all these items are checked, we can begin to celebrate the Fourth of July in its proper context. Independence carries with it many responsibilities. As Jews, and as citizens of a great democracy, it is our job to ensure that the meaning of this great holiday will not be lost.

The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism promotes the role of the synagogue in Jewish life in order to motivate Conservative Jews to perform *mitzvot* encompassing ethical behavior, spirituality, Judaic learning, and ritual observance. The mission of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism is to strengthen and serve our congregations and their members.

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The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Rapaport House, 155 Fifth Ave. New York, NY 10010
Tel: 212-533-7800 Fax: 212-353-9439
E-mail: info@uscj.org Website: www.uscj.org

Independence for All: A Holiday Checklist



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INDEPENDENCE FOR ALL:

A HOLIDAY CHECKLIST

Of all the catchwords in today's society, the word "independence" has particular resonance. Whether describing the condition of our nation or the nature of our economic affairs, we know that independence is a positive good, a desirable state.

Looking around today at the volatile political situation in so many countries around the world, American Jews can't help but feel blessed. Indeed, we revel in our political freedom and in our ability to conduct our lives free of governmental interference.

Nevertheless, before we begin to celebrate this July Fourth, we need to ensure that we have made the following holiday preparations.

Safeguarding Political Independence

___Did we pay attention last *Pesah* as we read the *Haggadah*, which teaches that we are not free unless all people are free?

___Do we urge our Members of Congress to support fellow democracies around the world?

___Do we support relief efforts for those displaced from their homes by civil strife?

___As citizens of a free nation, have we taken full advantage of our political rights?

___Do we vote in school board elections? City and state elections?

___Do we turn out in large numbers for Congressional and Presidential elections?

___Do we take seriously the notion that it is only by exercising our rights that we can hope to perpetuate them?

___Do we communicate with our legislators on a regular basis?

___Do we write to our newspapers?

___Have we taught our children the importance of participating in the political process?

Ensuring Economic Independence

___Have we taken any steps to help people who have slipped through the increasingly leaky safety net of social service programs?

___Have we given *tzedakah* this week?

___Do we acknowledge that economic enslavement is as soul-destroying as political tyranny?

___Have we framed our Jewish lives in such a way as to recognize and embody the teaching that the giving of charity is not only encouraged but mandated?

___Do we know in our hearts that while no one individual can eliminate poverty, we can, as individuals, make some difference in the lives of the hungry and the homeless in our own communities?