

At our Federation Board of Directors meeting on January 13, 2021, a statement was introduced regarding the assault on democracy at the Capital and in Washington DC last week. After a motion to send the statement to the editor of the Altoona Mirror, our elected representatives at the federal and state level, and have the statement posted on our website, and emailed to all Federation members, the motion was seconded, and then unanimously passed.

The Board felt a statement was necessary to address this horrendous act of civil unrest and disobedience.

Statement of the Board of Directors of the Greater Altoona Jewish Federation, January 13, 2021

We know that we are not alone with feelings of horror, disgust, and sadness after witnessing the assault on democracy and human dignity on January 6, 2020, at the Capital building and in Washington DC.

And we feel it is of the utmost importance that we acknowledge and condemn this outrageous evil act by American citizens that led to murder, destruction and chaos, all behaviors that threaten the values we cherish and hold most dear, truth, justice and respect for our fellow human beings.

We condemn all those involved in this egregious event, including those who incited this violent act, as well those who remain silent or indifferent, and support that all perpetrators be immediately brought to justice.

We will not be indifferent to hatred, and we reaffirm our commitment to call out hatred and bigotry wherever it exists and in whomever it exists.

In the words of Elie Wiesel from his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech on Dec. 10, 1986:

“Action is the only remedy to indifference: the most insidious danger of all,”

“We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must—at that moment—become the center of the universe.”

*The Greater Altoona Jewish Federation, organized in 1910 and incorporated in 1943, was founded and serves to promote the philanthropic, social, cultural and educational advancement of the local Jewish, interfaith and secular community, with an emphasis on social justice, human rights, and freedom consistent with our American democracy.*