

**REMARKS AT THE LOS ANGELES AJC
CONSULAR CORPS TOUR**

“Being Green is a Jewish Value: Our Concern for the Environment”

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June 13, 2008

Distinguished Guests, members of the Consular Corps, Dear AJC friends:

My name is Nadine Gerson. I am the co-chair, together with Allan Alexander, of the Energy Security Task Force in Los Angeles for the American Jewish Committee. We started the Energy Security efforts in Los Angeles in 2006. Personally, my inspiration to work on Energy Security emerged thinking every time I filled my gas tank that I was paying for missiles hitting the town of Sderot in Israel. I decided that I had to do something about the imports of oil to the US in order to protect the security of America and of Israel. Ladies and Gentlemen, as all of you know, it is not only America and Israel which are in danger. Many other world Nations, have seen their ability to make decisions that are good for them, being eroded by the enormous amounts of dollars that are spent on oil. In the US at \$130/barrel, almost \$1.5 billion dollars leave the country every day. This US dependency on oil, is not only an American problem, it is a worldwide problem, which not only has taken money away from education, health care and investment in renewable sources of energy, but it has also impaired our ability to make independent and constructive decisions for our own individual countries.

Furthermore, by continuing our dependence on fossil fuels, we prolong the damage inflicted on our environment and as a result, the potential problems to our health. According to the South Coast Air Quality Management District in Southern California, studies by the California Air Resources Board show that particulate matter pollution in the South Coast Air Basin is responsible for:

- 5,400 premature deaths annually,**
- 2,400 hospital admissions, and**
- 980,000 Lost Work Days.**

Jim Woolsey, former CIA Director and Energy Expert says: “We need to take the Power out of oil”, and so for California, the US, and the rest of the world, this is of vital importance. Especially in Los Angeles where we live in a “car culture” we need to follow a two pronged approach: build up our mass transit, and substitute our oil guzzling cars with fuel efficient, hybrid or electric cars. California is the third largest consumer of transportation fuels in the world (behind the US as a whole and China). California’s dependence on oil makes us extremely vulnerable to economic disruptions.

Therefore, at AJC Los Angeles, we are committed to the Jewish value of preserving the well-being of our Earth, by reducing our dependence on oil. We have built a strong energy program that involves member engagement and education, Jewish and non-Jewish community outreach, legislative advocacy, public relations, and fundraising.

This past year the LA chapter worked on many projects and here are the four which have had the greatest impact:

The first was the attendance of 40 AJC members and staff from all 4 California chapters at an energy forum and advocacy day in Sacramento– the first coordinated AJC effort ever done in California. Guest speakers included former CIA Director Jim Woolsey and key energy experts and officials from the Governor’s cabinet. AJC then met with 21 legislators in the State Capitol, talking about the need to reduce California’s dangerous dependence on oil.

The next initiative was the work we did with the County of Los Angeles, the largest employer in the County, to implement a car buying program similar to AJC, providing discounts to 100,000 County employees for purchase of a hybrid vehicle. The County of Los Angeles negotiated deep discounts with several dealers, and this program is in advanced stages of implementation.

The third project I wish to talk about today, is that LA actively engaged its members on the energy issue through the passage of a fuel efficient vehicle’ resolution and an ‘energy pledge’ that encourages members to reduce their carbon footprint.

Finally, LA is also integrating energy into all its programming. For example, tying the 'Israel at 60' campaign to energy at our Annual Luncheon by bringing Michael Granoff of Project Better Place to speak about Israel' electric car project.

In closing, I would like to take the opportunity to make a call to action. We in America, and all Nations of this Earth must work together to change our economic structure with its focus on fossil fuels. We must together develop sound energy alternatives. As a small step, I urge all of you, next time you personally or your consulates buy or lease a car, please get a high efficiency car or a hybrid vehicle. Let's all make a difference. Let's all persist at these tasks of making our World independent of fossil fuels and of becoming "green", by cleaning our environment for future generations.