



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0438-2024, **Version:** *

Res. No. 438

Resolution recognizing Landing Day in the second week of September annually to commemorate the arrival of the first Jewish community in New Amsterdam in 1654 and to celebrate the continuing importance of the Jewish community in the City of New York.

By Council Members Brewer, Dinowitz, Rivera, Restler, Menin, Vernikov, Schulman, Zhuang, Gennaro, Brannan, Hanif, Cabán, Brooks-Powers, Avilés, Powers, Abreu, Hudson, Louis, Ossé, Banks, Holden, Marte, Carr and the Public Advocate (Mr. Williams)

Whereas, During the week of September 7, 1654, a few days before Rosh Hashanah, a group of 23 Sephardic Jews arrived by boat near the southern tip of the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, having been preceded in late August by three Ashkenazi Jews-Jacob Barsimon and likely Solomon Pietersen and Asser Levy; and

Whereas, Fearing Spanish-Portuguese Inquisition reprisals, this group of 23 new arrivals had fled from the formerly Dutch city of Recife in Brazil after its capture by the Portuguese; and

Whereas, Based on his intolerant and hateful views, New Amsterdam's Dutch Director General Petrus (Peter) Stuyvesant took steps to expel these Jews from his jurisdiction in order to maintain the supremacy of the Dutch Reformed Church, writing that "the deceitful race...be not allowed to further infect and trouble this new colony"; and

Whereas, Upon appeal from the Dutch Jewish community, the Dutch West India Company, which itself included Jewish members, rebuked Stuyvesant and ordered him to allow Jews to become legal residents on the basis of "reason and equality"; and

Whereas, The new Jewish residents of New Amsterdam faced further discrimination from efforts to limit their civil rights, causing them to have to fight for their rights to own property, trade freely, stand guard

duty, worship in public, serve on juries, and become official citizens; and

Whereas, The Jewish residents of New Amsterdam and of the English colony of New York won expanded rights, often under the leadership of Levy, after petitioning the government; and

Whereas, The Mill Street Synagogue, the first Jewish congregation in the United States (U.S.), was consecrated in 1730 and eventually became Congregation Shearith Israel, the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, now located on West 70th Street in Manhattan; and

Whereas, The landing almost 370 years ago is now marked by the Jewish Tercentenary Monument and Flagstaff, placed at the southern tip of Manhattan in Peter Minuit Plaza by the State of New York and dedicated in 1955 in recognition of the Tercentennial Celebration of the arrival of the first Jews in North America; and

Whereas, The monument is a 75-foot-tall flagpole on a 7-foot-tall base of pink granite, which is adorned with a bronze plaque, sculpted by Abram Belskie; and

Whereas, The plaque is decorated with two lions framing a Star of David placed above a menorah and is inscribed with “Erected by the State of New York to honor the memory of the twenty three men women & children who landed in September 1654 and founded the first Jewish community in North America-American Jewish Tercentenary 1654-1954”; and

Whereas, In a September 2023 interview with *New York Jewish Week* during a Manhattan Jewish Historical Initiative (MJHI) Landing Day Celebration, Howard Teich, chair of MJHI and an advocate for an annual celebration of Jewish culture and achievements, noted that Jews have “got to spread a positive message of who we are, what we’ve accomplished, how we’ve worked with other people, what we’ve started, the difference we’ve made in the time we’ve been here and, really, what America has meant to us as a people”; and

Whereas, New York City (NYC) is now home to 1.6 million Jews, more than in any other city worldwide; and

Whereas, The Jewish people have more than a 3,500-year history, and NYC is one of the greatest urban centers of Jewish life in the history of the Jewish people; and

Whereas, A countless number of Jewish New Yorkers have distinguished themselves in NYC's political, cultural, religious, social, academic, legal, advocacy, civil rights, and economic life and history for centuries; and

Whereas, It is fitting to honor the arrival of those first Jews who came in 1654 to the shores of what would become the U.S. in pursuit of freedom and equality, just as so many other early arrivals did after them; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York recognizes Landing Day in the second week of September annually to commemorate the arrival of the first Jewish community in New Amsterdam in 1654 and to celebrate the continuing importance of the Jewish community in the City of New York.

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RHP