



B'NAI B'RITH INTERNATIONAL

February 6, 2008

The Honorable Barney Frank, Chairman
The Honorable Spencer Bachus, Ranking Member
Committee on Financial Services
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives Frank and Bachus:

On behalf of B'nai B'rith International's more than 200,000 members and supporters, I write to express concern about H.R. 1746, the Holocaust Insurance Accountability Act of 2007.

B'nai B'rith, which has long been actively engaged in efforts to obtain restitution for Holocaust survivors and reemerging European Jewish communities, has always regarded the interests of survivors as a leading priority of our organization, and we are determined to fight for justice for those who have suffered so greatly. We generally welcome any legislation or other policy initiatives that advance their cause. In this context, we have noted the opposition of some prominent critics of this particular legislation, such as former Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Stuart Eizenstat, Chairman Roman Kent of the American Gathering of Holocaust Survivors, and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany. Upon careful consideration, we cannot help but defer to their reservations about the bill.

This legislation comes in the wake of a lengthy process resulting in the payment of thousands of claims, amounting to over \$300 million, by insurance companies that cooperated with the International Commission for Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC). While this process may have been imperfect, it did involve the meticulous research of insurance policies and the identities of Holocaust victims who held those policies. ICHEIC not only facilitated the payment of claims against existing companies; it also paid out claims against now-defunct companies and funded survivor assistance programs. Furthermore, participating insurers have pledged to continue fielding new claims, so an important avenue remains open to survivors.

B'nai B'rith's fear is that this legislation, if passed, could invite new litigation that would disrupt the hard-fought legal peace promised to European governments and companies in exchange for their cooperation with ICHEIC. We are therefore concerned that future restitution negotiations might be compromised if this bill becomes law. We also worry that the legislation would unfairly raise the hopes of survivors without being able to satisfy their expectations.

B'nai B'rith urges that your Committee weigh these considerations in evaluating the efficacy of H.R. 1746. Thank you for your attention and cooperation.

Respectfully,

Eric Fusfield
Director of Legislative Affairs