

South Florida Jewish Journal/Sun Sentinel

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July 11, 2016

Is increased funding for Holocaust survivors enough?



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You may have heard that Germany will be providing more funds to needy Holocaust survivors, but according to Sam Dubbin of Miami — legal counsel for the Holocaust Survivors Foundation USA — the recent announcement "flies in the face of what is really needed."

Dubbin said: "Holocaust survivors should have all their medical needs financially met by Germany. That's why the recent resolutions in Congress — both in the House and Senate — have urged the German government to meet all medical needs of Holocaust survivors without any limits."

Dubbin reacted to the announcement on Tuesday, July 5 that The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) has negotiated a new agreement with Germany securing substantial funding increases for home care for poor Holocaust survivors worldwide over the next three years.

The Claims Conference represents world Jewry in negotiating for compensation and restitution for victims of Nazi persecution and their heirs.

The agreement, subject to approval by the German Parliament, provides for approximately \$500 million in additional funding over previous levels for the

coming two years, including an increase of \$111 million for 2017 and a total of nearly \$388 million for 2018.

"We commend the government of Germany for recognizing its continuing obligation to victims of the Holocaust more than 70 years after liberation," said Claims Conference Special Negotiator Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat in a recent Claims Conference press release. "Holocaust survivors, now in their final years, should know of our total commitment to trying to ensure they live in dignity with the help they need."

Currently, the Claims Conference provides home care to 67,000 elderly survivors — and additional services such as medical care, food and emergency financial assistance to a total of 121,000 survivors. The Claims Conference works with 240 organizations helping Holocaust victims in 46 countries.

These funds are used to aid elderly Holocaust victims with the activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing, cooking, help taking medications and toileting — so they may remain living in their own homes.

Additionally, the Claims Conference succeeded in raising the previous German government limit of 25 weekly hours of home care to 40 hours. However, all survivors who were in camps, ghettos or living in hiding will be exempt from any weekly limit.

The CEOs of the four local Jewish social-service agencies which distribute Claims Conference funding made a joint statement supporting the agreement, which reads in part: "Year after year, thousands of Holocaust survivors in South Florida are cared for due to one organization, The Claims Conference. They have been the only source for our survivor care programs that has been substantial, consistent and increasing every year.

"We applaud their efforts in securing increased funding so that we can provide even more life-sustaining services. We thank the Claims Conference for being a true and loyal partner. Without their support, we could not possibly provide for survivors at anywhere close to the level we do today."

The Holocaust Survivors Foundation USA — which has many executive board members from South Florida — was critical of the new agreement, however.

Excerpts of the organization's statement read: "The leadership of the Holocaust survivor community is extremely disappointed at yesterday's announcement by the

Claims Conference and Germany about their latest 'negotiation' over services for Holocaust survivors.

"It is long, long overdue that they have agreed to remove the cruel limits on the number of hours for home care funding that survivors have been forced to endure for decades. However, it is unconscionable that they did not also lift existing caps on emergency services as well. All caps on services for survivors must be lifted, across the board, period.

"The existing \$2,500 annual cap for all services — an amount rarely if ever available to most survivors due to overall funding limits and deep rationing — is causing massive harm to survivors everywhere.

"The reasons are obvious — the years of malnutrition, slave labor, repeated beatings, death marches and other tortures by the German Nazi regime have caused a terrible toll which has caught up with survivors as we age. So, this new plan is shockingly inadequate. It is beyond belief that the Claims Conference and Germany do not recognize this horrible reality.

"This is why the resolutions passed by the U.S. House of Representatives and pending in the U.S. Senate are so important — calling for full funding for all medical, emergency, mental-health care and well as long-term care needs."

The Holocaust Survivors Foundation USA also called for the end of the means testing of survivors such that those with the financial resources to pay for their own medical care are forced to do so.

The two local U.S. representatives who introduced the resolution in the House were mixed in their reactions to this latest agreement.

U.S. Rep. [Ileana Ros-Lehtinen](#) (R, FL-Miami) was very critical of the agreement.

In excerpts of a recent email statement, Ros-Lehtinen said: "The Claims Conference does not go nearly as far as is required in order to adequately help Holocaust survivors who are struggling with mounting bills for all aspects of care.

"All caps on care must be lifted immediately and Germany must move to fully address survivors' needs by providing all assistance to them directly and in a transparent and accountable manner that cannot be achieved through the current process with the Claims Conference.

"That is why the resolution I authored alongside [Ted \[Deutch\]](#) is still so important, and why the Senate should pass its own version — because this is about survivors getting all of their needs addressed and getting them addressed immediately. Anything less than that is frankly unacceptable."

U.S. Rep. Ted Deutch (D, FL-Boca Raton) was a little more measured.

In a recent email statement, Deutch commented: "This agreement with the German government will make a meaningful difference in the lives of thousands of survivors. We have advocated for getting rid of the arbitrary caps on home care hours so survivors can age with dignity in their homes, and now they will be lifted. We have advocated for dramatically increasing funding for survivors, and there will be a nearly 70 percent increase.

"There is still more to do, and we will keep working until Germany fully satisfies its moral obligation and all survivors' needs are met in full."

In response to the statement by the Holocaust Survivors Foundation, Amy Wexler, public relations manager for the Claims Conference (CC), sent the following bullet points by email (which are excerpted here):

- The Claims Conference has been negotiating for years with the German government to lift the limit on weekly hours of home care that an individual can receive. After protracted talks, in which the CC made the case that many survivors need more than 25 hours per week, the German government has finally agreed to fund additional care.
- The \$2,500 limit on emergency assistance — which is financial aid for items and services such as dental care, vision care and housing-related expenses — exists in order to be able to provide this kind of aid to as many survivors as possible. Funding to cover these costs is not limitless. Local organizations also have some discretion to offer more aid should they be able to do so and circumstances warrant it.
- The endeavor to attain a small measure of justice for the survivors of history's greatest crime is without parallel in human history. For the past decade, we have pressed for home care funding from Germany as the need for this aid has grown with the aging of survivors. We will continue to negotiate with Germany for as long as is needed.

If you are looking for aid for a Holocaust survivor locally, contact the:

- Alpert JFCS in Northern [Palm Beach County](#), 561-684-1191
- Rales JFS in Southern [Palm Beach County](#), 561-852-3333
- Goodman JFS in [Broward County](#), 954-370-2140
- JCS of South Florida in Miami-Dade County, 305-899-1587