

The Kustanowitz Kronikle

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Special Purim Edition

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CONGRESS VOTES STIMULUS FOR JEWISH COMMUNITY; NEW JOBS, MORE TAXES, SHUL MEMBERSHIP FOR ALL

*Synagogue Dues, Building Funds Greater Than \$1,000 Will Be Taxed;
Positive Effect Seen on 'Employment Change';
Universal Membership Assured Despite Pre-Existing Affiliation*

Special to the Kustanowitz Kronikle



FAIR LAWN, NJ, Feb. 28 -- Congress passed a massive omnibus bill today that will go a long way toward solving the most talked-about problems in the U.S. economy.

As a result of the bill's passage, employment change (formerly called unemployment) is likely to move in a positive direction, reversing the job losses that have dominated political discussion for

the last two years.

After months of discussion about totally overhauling the country's economy, Congress implemented a pilot coverage program to focus on one community. If successful, it will be expanded for the entire United States.

The Jewish community was selected because of its relatively small size and cohesive nature. Working through the Conference of Presidents of Major Conferences of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations (COPOMCOPOMJO), Congress will be able to direct funds to and collect taxes from a single source.

Also, all Jews who are unaffiliated with a synagogue will be given subsidies to join a shul. Membership will be mandatory. Anyone who refuses to become a synagogue member will be fined or face imprisonment.

Starting January 1, 2011, the U.S. Treasury will transfer \$999 billion to COPOMCOPOMJO, which will then distribute the funds to the 3,727 synagogues that were identified in the latest census. Orthodox houses of worship comprise 40 percent of the total, Conservative 23 percent, and Reform 26 percent.

Although the cost of the stimulus program appears large, Congress insists that it is deficit-neutral because the costs will be

offset by new taxes and fees and from savings in improved productivity and efficiencies in all synagogues. For example, the government will mandate only supermarket brand scotch, instead

of expensive single malt scotch at Kiddush. Cantors will be required to speed up the prayer service and rabbis will be restricted to 15-minute sermons in the hope that shorter services will result in lower electric bills. Hot kiddushes will be eliminated to reduce the use of gas and electricity to keep food warm.

The bill is more than 4,000 pages long. Its main provisions include:

New job creation to improve employment change. Previous volunteer jobs including Shushers, Candy Men, Children Chasers, Pledge Card Collectors, and Mechitzah Adjusters will now command salaries. (A more complete list of the jobs is on page 2.)

Mandatory synagogue membership for all Jews. Each unaffiliated family will receive \$500 toward synagogue membership. If actual membership cost is greater, they will have to make up the difference. If it is less, they can keep the difference.

Annual synagogue dues in excess of \$1,000 will be taxed, as will all building fund payments.

There will be a public option — guaranteed membership for \$500—but the government will decide which denomination's

(Continued on page 2)



SHUSHER: One of the new jobs to be created by the omnibus bill.

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It's Movie Awards Time! The Kronikle Presents:



**THE KUSTANOWITZ KIDS' PICKS
FOR THE 2009
SILVER GRAGGER MOVIE AWARDS**

Complete coverage on page 2

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It's Movie Awards Time! The Kronikle Presents:

THE KUSTANOWITZ KIDS' PICKS FOR THE 2009 SILVER GRAGGERS

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Golden Globes and the Oscars were a good warm-up act. Now, the Kronikle presents its own Silver Gragger awards for the outstanding film achievements of 2009.



WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE: A nanny bites off more than she can chew when she takes a job caring for a Charedi couple's 17 children.

UP IN THE AIR: A California transplant can't decide when to travel back east for her parents' seders.

UP: An ingenious *ba'al hagbah* brings helium balloons to shul to help him get the job of lifting the Torah done.

AWAY WE GO: A synagogue in an upscale

neighborhood closes its doors when all of its members head for Israel, Florida, Arizona, and Puerto Rico for the Passover holiday.

AN EDUCATION: The wacky adventures of a young couple attempting to make Pesach for the first time.

THE PROPOSAL: A religious young man breaks his family's all-time shidduch speed record when he shouts "Will you marry me?" on his way over to the table where his blind date awaits.

IT'S COMPLICATED: A Conservadox man meets the woman of his dreams, but she's egalitarian Modern Orthodox. Pressed to describe the difference between the two streams, the couple is rendered speechless.

CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF MEATBALLS: A family wakes to overcast skies, trying to decide whether to make the trip to shul for a catered bar mitzvah kiddush.

THE PRINCESS AND THE FROG: In this retelling of the book of Exodus, Pharaoh's daughter becomes romantically attached to the leader of the second of the Ten Plagues.

THE BLIND SIDE: The women belonging to a local synagogue revolt when their mechitzah is raised an additional ten feet.

THE HANGOVER: A seder goes terribly wrong when a new yeshiva student tells his parents that there are four plagues and ten cups of wine.

THE TAKING OF PELHAM 123: After outgrowing their communities in Williamsburg and Kiryas Joel, the Satmars take over the Young Israel synagogue and buy up all of the homes in the Bronx neighborhood of Pelham Parkway in the course of three days.

PUBLIC ENEMIES: A community is shocked and appalled when the local rabbi decides tuition has gotten out of control and enrolls his son in public school.

ADAM and CHAVATAR: A 3D-ChaiMAX retelling of the Garden of Eden story like you've never seen it before, with CGI special effects. The first man and first woman feel very blue after they eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE MORGANS?: Rumors spread in a Reform temple in Greenwich that the newest member family had moved in from Boro Park and changed their name from Morganstein.

PRECIOUS: A feminist scholar deconstructs the poem *Eishet Chayil* (A Woman of Valor) to identify the components of rabbinic-era attraction.

NINE: An angst-ridden musical about the nine men who show up for the morning minyan and exert frantic efforts to recruit a tenth so they can get to work on time.

THE MEN WHO STARE AT GOATS: Which goat will be slaughtered and which will be driven off a cliff to symbolize the sins of Israel? Go behind the scenes for an intimate reality-style portrait of the high priests who make these tough decisions.

THE LOVELY BONES: A new kosher supermarket opens a week before Pesach and advertises an opening special on shankbones for the seder plate.

CONGRESS VOTES STIMULUS BILL

(Continued from page 1)

synagogue they attend. If they refuse to affiliate with any denomination, they will have to pay a fine of \$1,000 or go to jail for five years.

Current members may keep their membership or change to a different denomination during the enrollment period from Rosh Hashanah to Chanukah. All synagogues will be required to accept new members regardless of pre-existing affiliations.

With more than one million unaffiliated families joining synagogues at the same time, there will be a shortage of seats for the High Holidays. Because of differences in popularity of denominations, rationing may be required. For example, if there are not enough seats in Conservative shuls, families will have to accept seats in Reform or Orthodox shuls. Members will have access to free counseling from government panels that will suggest that they switch to an alternate denomination, based on the available seat counts. Panel decisions will be final.

Public response to this bill has been largely unfavorable. Polling suggests that less than a third of Jews are pleased with this stimulus program. Protests are taking place across the country. Tea Room parties are planned at Passover resorts from the Catskills to the Caribbean, which will keep their tea rooms open 24 hours a day. Most objections are to the increase in taxes, the mandatory membership requirement, and to government panels deciding which synagogue each family will attend.

Pro-Choice groups such as *Choose Your Own Adventure* readers insist on having the right to choose their own denominations, whenever they want and as many times as they want.

Pro-Life groups such as *Frum From Birth* (FFB) maintain that no one has the right to terminate their affiliation with a denomination that they have been a member of for their whole life.

CONGRESSIONAL STIMULUS MONEY TO CREATE NEW JOBS

New Jewish community jobs created with stimulus money from Congress to move employment change in a positive direction:

CANDY MAN: Every child's favorite go-to person in shul. If he's away from his seat, children are authorized to peek into his tallit bag.

SHUSHER: Walks around the shul, constantly raising a finger to his mouth and urging talkers to keep their words to themselves.

CHILDREN CHASER: Run around shul, inside and out, to catch children who get out of control and return them to their parents.

(Note: This job requires experience in marathon running.)

MECHITZAH INSTALLER/REMOVER/ADJUSTER: Has to be available on short notice to install, take down, or adjust the height of the mechitzah, depending on which way the religious winds are blowing and whenever a new rabbi is appointed.

PLEDGE CARD COLLECTOR: Must be able to walk through every row in the synagogue and stare at each congregant until they pony up a pledge card with a folded-down tab.

GRAGGER TRAFFIC CONTROLLER: Has to hold a red octagonal stop sign high above his head on Purim when noise to drown out Haman's name gets too loud.

SUKKAH BUILDER AND LULAV REPAIRMAN: Must be available a week before Sukkot to put up the sukkah, and during the week of Sukkot to add new palm rings to lulavim that have been shaken too much.

RABBI'S CONTRACT NEGOTIATOR: Requires a high degree of legal and financial knowledge, and also much patience.