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State Rep. Elaine Davis and State Sen. Richard Briggs announce \$151K to strengthen security at Jewish institutions in Knox County

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – **State Rep. Elaine Davis**, R-Knoxville, and **State Sen. Richard Briggs**, R-Knoxville, today announced \$151,560 in state grant funding to strengthen security for members of the Jewish community in Knox County.

The grants, administered by the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security, will be used to pay for contracted security personnel at various religious institutions statewide. The funds are part of a \$750,000 budget appropriation for the Houses of Worship Security Grant Program that was secured by the two lawmakers earlier this year.

“Every Tennessean should be able to safely and freely practice their faith,” Davis said. “These grants will ensure religious institutions in Knox County and across our state have access to the security they need to best protect their members. I was proud to help secure this funding, and I appreciate my colleagues in the General Assembly for their support.”

Local grant recipients include:

- Heska Amuna Synagogue: \$13,170
- Knoxville Jewish Alliance: \$62,714
- Stanford Eisenberg Knoxville Jewish Day School: \$56,075
- Temple Beth El: \$19,601

“These security grants for houses of worship are more important than ever,” Briggs said. “Unfortunately, anti-Semitism is on the rise across the world following the heinous terror attacks on our Jewish brothers and sisters in Israel on October 7. I hope these grants help bring peace of mind to the citizens who attend these religious institutions in Knoxville.”

The Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security awarded 19 grants statewide this year through the Houses of Worship Security Grant Program. Applicants were required to demonstrate the threat and vulnerability to their organization as well as how the funding would address gaps and deficiencies in their current program and capabilities. Funds awarded through the program will cover expenses from July 1 through June 30, 2024.

According to a recent [study](#), Jewish institutions nationwide were targeted by 589 antisemitic incidents during 2022. That was a 12 percent increase from the previous year.

All 75 members of the Tennessee House Republican Caucus signed a letter earlier this month asking Gov. Bill Lee and U.S. House and Senate leaders to fully support Israel in its efforts to defend itself against terrorists and to offer aid in the safe return home of American citizens. The letter followed a joint proclamation issued on behalf of the House and Senate by House Speaker Cameron Sexton, R-Crossville, and Lt. Gov. Randy McNally, R-Oak Ridge, condemning the attack by the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas and expressing support for the state of Israel.

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