



For Immediate Release
September 23, 2011
Contact: Yuliya Shamailova, (212) 233-5555 Ext 109

New York – On September 21, 2011 Members of the United States Congress gathered in the U.S. Capitol to announce the introduction of legislation to award a Congressional Gold Medal to legendary Holocaust humanitarian, Raoul Wallenberg.

The luncheon took place in the historic LBJ room and featured a bipartisan gathering of the House and Senate as well as organizational, spiritual, and diplomatic leaders across the spectrum. Both bills were introduced simultaneously as H.R. 3001 and S. 1591 in the House and Senate respectively.

U.S. Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand (D-NY) who introduced the legislation in the Senate along with Senators Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Carl Levin (D-MI), spoke passionately of how Wallenberg rose to the challenge during one of the darkest times in our history.

“The heroic rescue of Hungarian Jews by Raoul Wallenberg during one of the darkest hours of human history exemplifies his outstanding spirit and dedication to humanity,” said **Senator Gillibrand**, who was introduced by Leon Goldenberg. “It is my honor to introduce a bill in the Senate to award Raoul Wallenberg with the Congressional Gold Medal for the innocent Jewish lives that he selflessly saved during the Holocaust.”

New York Congressman Gregory Meeks (D-NY) who introduced the legislation in the House along with Congresswoman Nan Hayworth (R-NY) spoke passionately as to how he hopes to greet the audience next year back in the Congress after the Medal’s successful passage; while Congresswoman Hayworth spoke of her recent, moving trip to Israel. Chair of the Armed Services Committee, Senator Carl Levin, spoke of the importance of recognizing Wallenberg on the centennial of his birth and his pride in being an early cosponsor. Co-Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, Senator Ben Cardin, applauded Senator Gillibrand on her leadership in the issue and spoke of the importance of honoring Wallenberg’s achievements. Other prominent members of Congress that spoke include Representatives Nadler, Grimm, Cohen, Sherman, Rahall, Green, Lamborn, and Rohrabacher.

Wallenberg worked for the US War Refugee Board creating protective passports and safe houses for Jews in danger of being deported to Auschwitz, but his fate remains unknown after he was taken prisoner in 1945 by the Russian Army on charges of spying for the US. Swedish Ambassador Jonas Hafström attended and hailed Washington, DC as the city that has adopted Wallenberg as one of its own. Publisher of the Hamodia and Director of Project Witness, Ruth Lichteinstein, delivered the keynote address and spoke of the spiritual heroism of Raoul Wallenberg. Other attendees included András Bácsi-Nagy, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Republic of Hungary, Luncheon Chair Ken Abramowitz, and the Luncheon Master of Ceremonies Jonathan J. Rikoon. The Gold Medal is part of a larger effort in honoring Raoul Wallenberg in time for his centennial in 2012 by the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission, spearheaded by CEO of the Friedlander Group, Ezra Friedlander.