



Rabbi David Saperstein

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Rabbi David Saperstein represents the national Reform Jewish Movement to Congress and the Administration as the Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. [The Center not only advocates on a broad range of social justice issues but provides extensive legislative and programmatic materials to synagogues, federations and Jewish community relations councils nationwide, and coordinates social action education programs that train nearly 3,000 Jewish adults, youth, rabbinic and lay leaders each year.]

Described in a Washington Post profile as the “quintessential religious lobbyist on Capitol Hill,” during his three-decade tenure as Director of the Center, he has headed several national religious coalitions and serves on the boards of numerous national organizations including the NAACP, People For the American Way, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life. In 1999, Rabbi Saperstein was elected as the first Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom created by a unanimous vote of Congress.

Under Rabbi Saperstein, writes J.J. Goldberg in his book, Jewish Power, the Religious Action Center “has become one of the most powerful Jewish bodies in Washington, second only to AIPAC.” In 2004 and 2006, the Wall Street Journal and the Religion News Service respectively described him as among the country’s most influential shapers of religious issues in national elections.

Rabbi Saperstein was recently appointed to be a council member of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Also an attorney,

Rabbi Saperstein teaches seminars in both First Amendment Church-State Law and in Jewish Law at Georgetown University Law School.

A prolific writer and speaker, Rabbi Saperstein has appeared on a number of television news and talk shows including Crossfire, the O'Reilly Factor, Hardball, Nightline, Oprah, Lehrer News Hour and ABC's Sunday Morning. His articles have appeared in the Washington Post, the New York Times and the "Harvard Law Review." His latest book is Jewish Dimensions of Social Justice: Tough Moral Choices of Our Time.

Rabbi Saperstein is part of a large rabbinic family. Two great uncles were Reform rabbis, and two great-grandfathers were Orthodox rabbis; his father Harold and Uncle Sanford were well-known Reform rabbis; and his brother Marc is one of this generation's leading Jewish scholars.

Rabbi Saperstein is married to Ellen Weiss, Vice President for news of National Public Radio. They have two sons, Daniel and Ari.

In his book Thunder in America, network news correspondent Bob Faw wrote of Rabbi Saperstein: "Saperstein learned from political masters...[His] energy was almost legendary -- no one around him worked longer hours, no one darted in and out of more meetings... Once he'd taken on an assignment, he'd always guide it safely home to completion."