



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of the Governor

Executive Order

NUMBER EIGHT (2022)

ESTABLISHING THE COMMISSION TO COMBAT ANTISEMITISM

By virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor, I hereby issue this Executive Order establishing a commission to combat antisemitism in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Importance of the Initiative

The Commonwealth of Virginia has been a pioneer for religious freedom since the earliest days of our nation. Tomorrow, January 16, 2022, will be the 236th anniversary of the Virginia General Assembly enacting the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom; promising that no man “shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief.” These words – as important today as when first written – remain enshrined in our Constitution and provide the basis of our enduring commitment to religious tolerance and equality.

Our nation and our Commonwealth have seen an intolerable rise in antisemitism in recent years. Antisemitism, as defined by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, “is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.” Sadly, in 2020, Virginians experienced a record number of antisemitic incidents. This disturbing trend has brought to the forefront the necessity of a targeted effort to combat the rising threat of antisemitism and ensure all Virginians are free to live their lives without the threat of harassment, violence, or discrimination. Every manifestation of antisemitism or Holocaust denial is an affront to our society and will not be accepted in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Virginia must once again lead the way in ensuring religious freedom and equality for all citizens. We must reaffirm our commitment to stand against hatred and intolerance, and develop an actionable plan to combat antisemitism in our Commonwealth. A commission will help us

better understand the scourge of antisemitism and represents a meaningful first step towards ensuring a Commonwealth free from antisemitic harassment, violence, or discrimination in the lives of Jewish Virginians.

Establishment of the Commission to Combat Antisemitism

Accordingly, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor, under Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and §§ 2.2-134 and 2.2-135 of the *Code of Virginia*, and subject to my continuing and ultimate authority and responsibility to act in such matters, I hereby establish the Commission to Combat Antisemitism (Commission).

The purpose of this Commission is to study antisemitism in the Commonwealth, propose actions to combat antisemitism and reduce the number of antisemitic incidents, as well as compile materials and provide assistance to Virginia's public school system and state institutions of higher education in relation to antisemitism and its connection to the Holocaust.

The Commission shall make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly with the goal of identifying ways to reverse increasing antisemitic incidents in the Commonwealth.

Composition and Support of the Commission

The Governor will appoint the members and Chair(s) of the commission. The Governor will select community and faith leaders, experts, and scholars with experience of and/or knowledge of antisemitism.

The Governor may appoint other members at any time to carry out the assigned functions of the Commission. The Commission will have an advisory role and the members will serve without compensation, in accordance with § 2.2- 2100 of the *Code of Virginia*. In carrying out its duties, the Commission may appoint working groups as it deems appropriate, and may solicit participation from relevant subject matter experts, practitioners, and analysts.

Staff support for the Commission will be provided by the Office of the Governor and any other agencies or offices as may be designated by the Governor. An estimated 250 hours of staff time will be required to support the work of the Commission. No direct costs are expected for the work of the Commission.

Duties of the Commission

The Commission will meet upon the call of the Chair(s) and will issue an interim report with its findings and recommendations no later than December 1, 2022, International Holocaust Remembrance Day, and any additional reports and recommendations as necessary or as requested by the Governor. This report may also include a proposed framework for the continuation of the Commission's work. The Commission's findings and recommendations will be distributed to promote best practices across the Commonwealth.

Effective Date of the Executive Order

This Executive Order shall be effective upon signing and shall remain in full force and effect for one year from its signing, unless amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this 15th day of January 2022.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Glenn Youngkin", written in a cursive style.

Glenn Youngkin, Governor

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kelly Thomasson", written in a cursive style.

Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of the Commonwealth