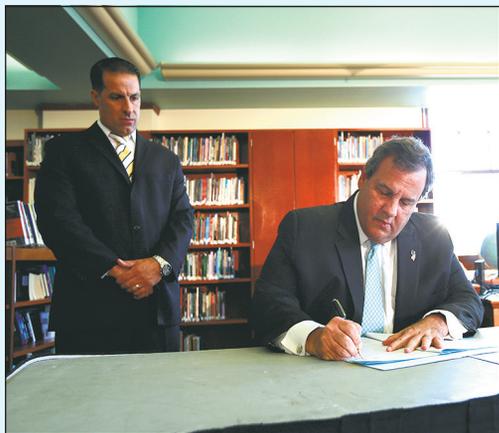


**Journey** from page 4



**Gov. Chris Christie signs the Secure Schools for All Children Act into law.** Photo courtesy Office of the Governor

# Governor signs security bill for nonpublic schools

ON SEPT. 6, Gov. Chris Christie signed into law A2689, the “Secure Schools for All Children Act,” establishing a state aid program for security services, equipment, and/or technology to ensure safe and secure environments for students in nonpublic school. The new law makes permanent the annual funding of \$75 per student.

The State Association of Jewish Federations supported the advocacy efforts of nonpublic-school interest organizations guided by the NJ Catholic Conference and the Orthodox Union. The State Association, said its president, Gordon Haas, through its support helped “deliver to Gov. Christie and the NJ Legislature a strong message on behalf of the safety concerns of students in our community day schools and yeshivas and all of the state’s nonpublic schools.”

This legislation “represents a historic milestone for our nonpublic schools and will be integral to providing for the safety of our children,” said Nathan J. Lindenbaum, cochair of TeachNJS, a project of the OU that spearheaded the coalition of organizations advocating for its passage.

With approximately 40,000 students in Jewish community schools, enactment of A2689 translates into \$3 million for Jewish community schools’ security, to be distributed annually beginning with the 2017-18 school year.

The main sponsors of the legislation are Assemblyman Gary Schaer (D-Dist. 36) and Sen. Jim Beach (D-Dist. 6).

State Association executive director Jacob Toporek expressed gratitude to Christie for enacting the bill and to Schaer and Beach for “championing the effort in their respective legislative chambers. To our community advocacy partners, *yashir koach and mazal tov.*”

by Gais in 2003 that met in the Masonic Lodge in Madison until 2014. That’s when the group moved into space at Congregation Ohr Shalom: the Summit JCC, obviating the need for the scroll, which then took up temporary residence in the ark at Congregation B’nai Israel in Basking Ridge, where Schechter is the rabbi.

Russell Jayne said he was thrilled to learn about the choice of the scroll’s newest home. It was Jayne, originally of Boonton and now the cantor at Congregation Beth Tzedec in Calgary, Canada, who funded and arranged for preparation of the scroll for Chavurat Lamdeinu shortly after its founding. A member since the *havura’s* inception, he acquired the scroll so the group would have a second Torah, a common practice designed to avoid too much wear and tear on a single scroll.

“I was honored to help the little *havura* group feel more established, to function like a real congregation as it got together to study and for prayer,” said Jayne in a phone interview. And now, he has gladly endorsed the scroll’s being sent to the congregation in Gdansk. “I’m so honored that the Torah is going back to Europe, where it came from. If we can make another synagogue feel more secure and stable, that’s an honor,” he said.

Not much is known about the Torah’s prove-



**Schechter and Gais bless the scroll before its journey.** Photo by Johanna Ginsberg

nance, according to Jayne, except that it was rescued after the Holocaust from a synagogue basement somewhere in Europe and brought to Israel. It sustained some water damage — which can still be seen on the parchment in *Deuteronomy* — but Jayne had a scribe restore the text to kosher status before having it sent to New Jersey.

Jayne also commissioned the wooden ornaments from synagogue furniture and ritual item designer Gabriel Bass, along with the silk Torah cover from American fabric artist Adrienne Yorinks.

It was Gais who stumbled over the request for a Torah scroll for Beit Trojmiasto. She recalls thinking, “Aha! We have a Torah!” she told *NJ Jewish News*.

There were logistics to work out — like how to get the scroll to Poland (enter a Boston congregation that happened to have a trip planned and volunteered to take the precious cargo with them) and how to get it to Boston (several possible rides fell through, so Gais turned to FedEx). And finally, a more spiritual question: What is the proper send-off for a Torah scroll? Although several attempts were made by Gais and Schechter to find a precedent, they found none. So together they chose Psalm 34:15, “seek peace and pursue it.”

After the Torah scroll set off on the first leg of its journey, Gais wrote in an e-mail to the *havura* and to Beit Trojmiasto, “Hallelujah!”

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**Members of Boston's Central Reform Temple awaiting their departure for Poland, with the Torah scroll, at Logan International Airport.** Photos courtesy Ruth Gais



**Kasia Mazurkiewicz of Beit Trojmiasto, fourth from left, meets the travelers from Boston to receive the Torah scroll after their arrival in Warsaw.**



**Congregants at Beit Trojmiasto welcome the scroll to its new home in Gdansk.**