



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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ICYMI: One Year Later, Governor Shapiro and First Lady Shapiro Commemorate Arson Attack on the Governor's Residence with Interfaith Leaders

In the same room that was burned one year ago, Governor and First Lady Shapiro brought together faith leaders from across the Commonwealth.

During their conversation, the Governor and faith leaders spoke about standing together in the face of intolerance and carrying William Penn's legacy of acceptance forward.

Since taking office, the Shapiro Administration has awarded more than \$25 million in support to increase security measures at nonprofit and faith-based organizations.

Harrisburg, PA – Yesterday, **Governor Josh Shapiro** and **First Lady Lori Shapiro** held a roundtable discussion commemorating the first Passover Seder to be hosted at the Governor's Residence since the arson attack one year ago on the first night of Passover. Pennsylvania leaders from different faiths came together to offer their prayers and support, and spoke about the importance of condemning all forms of political violence.

Under Governor and First Lady Shapiro, the State Reception Room – the first room the arsonist attacked with a molotov cocktail – has hosted a number of faith-based gatherings over the last three years, including celebrations for Passover, Hannukah, Christmas, and Ramadan.

“In the last year, our family has found real healing in the prayers and the offerings of strength that we have received from people all across Pennsylvania and the country — especially those who don't worship like us, who come to their religions with different practices, and different approaches, but with the same throughline in our faiths and our

shared humanity,” said **Governor Shapiro**. “Now, I think it is so important we reaffirm our commitment to peace and our commitment to the principle of understanding that we may have disagreements, but violence is never the answer.”

The Governor and First Lady convened the roundtable discussion with faith leaders including **Chaplain John Wardle** of the Penn Township Fire Company; **Bishop Timothy Senior** of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg; **Rabbi Ariana Captauber** of Beth El Temple; **Reverend Marshall Mitchell** of Salem Baptist Church; **President Navtej Grewal** of the Harrisburg Sikh Society; **Imam Idris Zahir** of the Masjidullah Islamic Center; and **Vibheeshan Gereddy**, founder of the Sai Mandir of Harrisburg.

“Even though we’re not a church, in our firehouse, we have the opportunity to provide love and concern for the people at the top and at the bottom,” said **Chaplain John Wardle of the Penn Township Fire Company**, who gave the Governor a handwritten prayer after the arson attack. “And we tried to show some of that love to the Governor’s family when this tragedy happened.”

“I think there are some things that you can tell a person, but it’s a whole different thing when you actually show up and walk the walk,” said **Imam Idris Zahir of the Masjidullah Islamic Center**. “There are people that come from all different backgrounds who are taught all types of things, but you still see people who believe in common humanity and I believe that what is good, stands out from what is not.”

“There is a verse in Sikhism that means we are all one, because this world has no place for hatred or discrimination,” said **President Navtej Grewal of the Harrisburg Sikh Society**. “So conversations like these help us, because we can learn from the past and look to the future.”

As part of the roundtable, leaders also highlighted the alarming rise in political violence across the United States, including threats targeting faith-based organizations, religious institutions, and community organizations.

“Political violence is never okay, yet we live in a world where it’s becoming all too commonplace and although the bar is lowered, it begins with our public discourse because our words can spark the flames,” said **Bishop Timothy Senior of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg**. “So this is where we have to begin, as faith leaders, doing the work to model respect for human dignity — and at its core, respect for beliefs.”

“It’s powerful for us to be here, sitting together — reading from different books, but on the same page,” said **Reverend Marshall Mitchell of Salem Baptist Church**. “Because we understand that we must stand up in the face of political and religious violence and send a message that the Commonwealth will not dwell on the past, but we’ll move forward to a brighter sense of what we can be and what we should be.”

“We ask, ‘how do we get better?’,” said **Vibheeshan Gereddy, founder of the Sai Mandir of Harrisburg**. “We should respect all religions and refrain from all types of

violence — we need to see more leaders who come out of something like this and still have respect for all religions.”

Since taking office, the Shapiro Administration has provided **more than \$25 million** in funding to increase security measures at nonprofit and faith-based organizations through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD)’s [Nonprofit Security Grant Fund Program](#), including PCCD’s [recent round of grants](#), delivering nearly **\$11 million** to organizations across the Commonwealth.

Under the Governor’s leadership, funding for the [Nonprofit Security Grant Fund Program](#) has nearly doubled, providing a total of **\$35 million** in support to over 600 unique organizations across the Commonwealth since its creation in 2019 — helping protect approximately seven million Pennsylvanians.

By bringing together leaders from a number of faiths, in the same room that was burned in the arson attack one year ago, **Governor Shapiro** and the First Lady reaffirmed their commitment to Pennsylvania’s founding beliefs in choosing unity and resilience, in the face of rising intolerance.

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