

MEREDITH WEISEL:

Championing Equality for All

BY CARYN R. SAGAL

Around age 12, Meredith Weisel had to memorize and recite the Gettysburg Address — a routine school assignment which ultimately would guide her career.

“Understanding that we are an imperfect nation and imperfect world doesn’t mean we should ever give up on the ideals of equality and fair treatment for all people,” says Weisel, vice president of state and local advocacy for the Anti-Defamation League. “This is what drew me to getting involved in public policy and community affairs work.”

While attending American University, Weisel interned on Capitol Hill and studied abroad in London, where she participated in a co-op with a justice organization focusing on youth in the community.

Straight out of Widener University School of Law, she joined the Greater Capital Area Association of REALTORS and eventually became one of their head lobbyists and legal counsel. After serving in-house for nine-and-a-half years, she started her own consulting firm as principal owner, providing governmental affairs and relations consulting on legislative action and public policy solutions, community relations, political affairs, and lobbying and legal services to the realtors and additional clients in Maryland.

Concurrently, she was one of the partners at Government Affairs Strategies LLC, which developed strategic visions to help clients



throughout the country achieve successful public policy, political affairs and public advocacy outcomes.

Returning to in-house work, Weisel joined the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington. As director of Maryland government and community relations, she spent nearly four years helping to advance legislative policies to strengthen hate crimes laws; confront and educate about antisemitism; secure security funds for houses of worship, schools and child care centers at-risk of hate crimes; and enhance Holocaust education.

Building on her work to combat antisemitism, Weisel headed to the ADL’s Washington, D.C., regional

office in 2019, starting as the senior associate regional director, before being promoted to deputy regional director and then regional director. In fact, she was the first woman to lead that regional office.

“[As a woman,] I tend to find more compromise or middle ground and meet people where they are,” says Weisel, who lives in Montgomery County with her family. “It’s crucial to lead with empathy even if we are steadfast and strong in our own positions. I try to reflect on times I’ve gotten it wrong so I can learn and grow.”

Through the years, Weisel has helped pass various pieces of legislation that have changed lives. She also has been at the helm of historic occasions, speaking at the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington

and helping to lead several of ADL’s In Concert Against Hate events.

“The 2023 event was just three weeks after the Oct. 7 brutal attack and massacre in Israel,” she explains. “We had to pivot from many aspects of the event and find a way to honor the history of the concert and highlight the tragedy of Oct. 7, along with speaking out about the hostages being held.”

“One year later, we needed to find a way to showcase the complex nature of what was happening here with a rise in antisemitic incidents, still advocating for the release of hostages and balancing that by uplifting hope in our communities,” she adds. “It was not easy, but I’m so pleased with how

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we highlighted Jewish pride, called out hate and division, honored everyday heroes for their work in combating antisemitism and extremism, and showcased hope.”

In February 2025, Weisel was promoted to her current role, a newly created position on ADL’s National Affairs team.

“Right now, a lot of my focus is helping to strategize what a state and local advocacy plan can look like for ADL,” she explains. “We just released our Jewish Policy Index, which is a first-of-a-kind tool developed by the Ratings & Assessments Institute, to systematically assess the alignment of state-level policies that are crucial in addressing antisemitism and having a real impact on curbing hate and extremism across all categories.”

In close coordination with her colleagues on the National Affairs team and in the regional offices, Weisel

works to plan, oversee and execute real policy solutions to combat antisemitism which, she notes, is now “a national and global emergency that has reached unprecedented levels.”

“We’ve seen it have real-world consequences: a young couple is murdered for simply attending a Jewish community event at a Jewish institution in D.C., Jewish marchers are burned by an arsonist in Colorado and a Jewish governor’s house set on fire in Pennsylvania,” she explains. “Antisemitism has been mainstreamed and normalized, the likes of which we have not seen in this country for generations.”

Weisel admits her work can be emotionally draining, but when tragedy strikes, she will not hesitate to spring into action.

“I made a conscious decision to get involved in this work and I want to be there for my community and for all

communities,” she says. “The lines are blurred between my professional and personal life, but I would not change that at all right now. I only hope I can continue to speak out and be a leader for those who need it.”

She continues to draw inspiration from those willing to stand up against antisemitism, including allies on Capitol Hill and in state and local governments and partners in the Jewish community.

“I hope that people can be encouraged to remember to lift yourself up every day, remember to lift others up every day, and remember that even though antisemitism and hate are showing up here at home, we can do something about it,” she says. “We can be part of the solution. Together, we can together break down barriers and combat hate in all forms.” □

Caryn R. Sagal is a freelance writer.

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