

Good morning,

My name is Robert Zelwin. I am the president of the Kol Israel Foundation, an organization that was founded in 1959 by Holocaust survivors, including my parents Ida and Sam Zelwin of blessed memory. Most of the survivors came to this country with nothing more than the clothes they were wearing. On February 2, 1960 the Ohio Secretary of State recognized Kol Israel as a non-profit organization. The members started fundraising amongst themselves as well as with many local Jewish philanthropists and Cleveland businesses to build a lasting monument that would be dedicated to the six million Jews who were killed in the Holocaust. It was one of the first monuments built in the United States that was dedicated to those martyrs who were exterminated because they were Jewish.

The monument was dedicated on May 28, 1961 and is the site of an annual memorial service, held each year on the Sunday between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Co- Sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Cleveland, the event serves as an opportunity for families to say the Mourner's Kaddish(memorial prayer) for departed Holocaust victims who did not receive a proper burial or do not have a known grave, as well as departed Survivors. It is a well- attended community event.

The Kol Israel Memorial & Commemoration Committee has been established to preserve, protect and enhance the Holocaust Monument at Zion Memorial Park in Bedford Heights, Ohio. Buried at the base of the monument are ashes and artifacts of Jewish martyrs killed by the Nazis from three concentration camps. Engraved on surrounding walls are the names of family members who perished during the Holocaust, as well as the names of departed Survivors.

Through the leadership of past president Mark Frank and board member Andrew Miszak, Kol Israel Foundation are engaged in designating our Monument a national landmark. Presently, we are a State of Ohio Historical site. I would like to thank State Senators Yuko and Dolan for sponsoring this bill. I know you are familiar with the site because of your presence last September at our annual memorial service.

Today Kol Israel is all about education. Our motto is Resilience, Remembrance, and Holocaust education. Our primary focus has been school age students. We are expanding our reach by speaking to adult groups as well as businesses. With very few Holocaust survivors left, it is up to people of my generation to tell their stories. My parents were part of the

Bielski Partisan group that resisted and fought the Nazis and lived in the Naloboki Forests for 3 ½ years. Their story was depicted in the major motion picture Defiance that starred Daniel Craig and Liev Schreiber. I have dedicated myself to telling my parents' story.

Getting a National Landmark dedication would go a long way to educating people about the Holocaust, as well as getting additional recognition. I would like to thank you for allowing me to address you here at the Statehouse on the corner of High and Broad. In years past it was always a welcome site as the finish line the times I ran the Columbus Marathon. My hope is this will be the starting line on our way to national recognition for the Kol Israel monument.

Thank you

