



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

July 10, 2007

Mr. Franz Müntefering
Minister for Labor and Social Affairs
Willhemstrasse 49
11017 Berlin
GERMANY

Dear Minister Franz Müntefering

As members of the United States Congress representing Holocaust survivors in Los Angeles, New York, Miami and other metropolitan areas we have a strong interest in the processing of cases under the Ghetto Pension Law (Gesetz zur Zahlbarmachung von Renten aus Beschäftigungen in einem Ghetto – ZRBG). Some of us have written to the German Government on this issue in August 2004 and in May 2005.

We greatly appreciated the detailed response sent by the then-Minister for Social Welfare, Ulla Schmidt, in June 2005 and in particular her commitment to do the utmost, in cooperation with the supervisory authorities, to see the ZRBG law applied in a fair manner and to the full extent envisaged by the legislature. The Ministry also committed to address a backlog of applications and significantly reduce the processing time of the Landesversicherungsanstalt Freie and Hansestadt Hamburg (LDV).

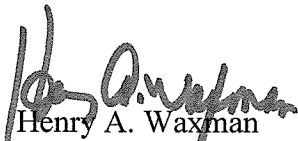
It is our understanding at this time that all applications under the ZRBG have now been processed. We are deeply concerned, however, that statistics indicate that over 94% of the more than 70,000 applications received were rejected. In addition, we have heard from our constituents that the interpretation of the eligibility criteria and method of processing of applications was applied in an inconsistent manner – despite the commitment of the German Government to provide uniform guidance to the individual authorities administering the program.

Consequently, we believe that further action must be taken to address these problems and clearly specify the eligibility criteria for the program under the ZRBG law. Such action is necessary to facilitate the fair and consistent resolution of numerous pending court appeals of LDV decisions. One specific area of concern is the need for a clear determination under the law that indirect payment or benefits received by ghetto workers should be considered as ‘payment’ for the purposes of eligibility in the program. There must also be a change to ensure that applicants can ask that their cases be re-opened and evaluated on the basis of the new guidance.

We urge the German Government to act swiftly to deal with this matter of great importance to the elderly Holocaust survivors the law was intended to benefit, consistent with the constructive manner that Germany has dealt with these issues during the past 60 years.


We look forward to your response.


Sincerely,


Henry A. Waxman
Member of Congress



Tom Lantos
Member of Congress


Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress



Robert Wexler
Member of Congress


Gary L. Ackerman
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress


Howard L. Berman
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Eliot L. Engel
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Carolyn B. Maloney
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Ron Klein
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Barney Frank
Member of Congress



John R. "Randy" Kuhl, Jr.
Member of Congress



Steve Israel
Member of Congress


Shelley Berkley
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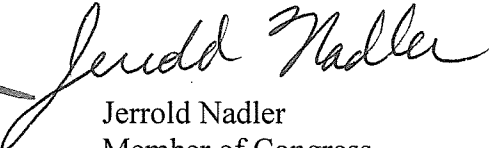

Janice D. Schakowsky
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