

Hikind, Orthodox Jews Here Fight Organ Donation Bill

by Brooklyn Eagle (edit@brooklyneagle.net), published online 05-03-2010

Well-Known B'klyn Lawmaker Slams 'Invasion of Body Snatchers'

BROOKLYN -- Calling Assemblyman Richard Brodsky's (D-Westchester) presumed consent legislation "tantamount to entrapment," Assemblyman Dov Hikind (D-Brooklyn) Monday launched an opposition campaign to prevent the bill from moving forward in Albany.

If passed, New York would be the first state that presumes people wish to donate their organs unless they specifically opt-out. Presently, prospective donors must give permission to donate their organs by checking a box on their driver's licenses in the presence of two witnesses, or by filling out a donor card.

Joining Hikind in opposition are the Rabbinical Alliance of America, a rabbinic organization which boasts more than 800 members nationwide; The Catholic League, the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization; The National Council of Young Israel, an Orthodox Jewish synagogue movement with 146 branches across North America; and leaders from Chessed Shel Emes, an organization which prepares members of the Jewish community for burial according to Orthodox tradition.

In traditional Judaism, organ donation is often seen somewhat skeptically. Generally speaking, if an organ for a particular transplant is needed urgently, it's considered OK, but people are discouraged from donating their organs to "organ banks." Hikind's base is the Orthodox Jewish community of mid-Brooklyn.

"This legislation is blatantly unfair," said Hikind. "We intend to do everything in our power to prevent a real-life invasion of the body snatchers in New York state."

Hikind added that while he supports all those who wish to donate voluntarily, the notion of presumed consent poses a great risk to those who simply forget to opt-out, and consequently, may be forced to donate their organs upon death. "This bill is tantamount to entrapment," noted Hikind.

National Council of Young Israel President Steven Z. Mostofsky, Esq. remarked, "While organ donation is commendable, it should be a person's choice to do so. The U.S. Constitution has been cited many times to protect citizen's rights to control their own bodies. Why should people not be able to control what happens to their body after they die?"

"The predicate of these bills is that the government enjoys a lien on our bodies," added Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League. "That is obscene."