

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION paying tribute to Rabbi Arthur Schneier upon the occasion of the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of his installation as the Rabbi and spiritual leader of Park East Synagogue on March 18, 2012

WHEREAS, Spiritual guidance and nurturing are of great import to the vitality and well-being of all people and every community of this great State and nation, and of all nations; and

WHEREAS, The character and richness of life are nourished and fulfilled through the concern and selfless devotion of those, such as Rabbi Arthur Schneier, who dedicate their purposeful lives in service to their faith and to the enhancement of the quality of life of others; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to honor Rabbi Schneier upon the occasion of the celebration, on March 18, 2012, of the 50th Anniversary of his installation as the Rabbi and spiritual leader of New York City's Park East Synagogue; and

WHEREAS, Born in Vienna, Austria on March 20, 1930, Rabbi Schneier, who is married to Elisabeth Nordmann Schneier, lived under Nazi occupation in Budapest during World War II and arrived in the United States in 1947; and

WHEREAS, In addition to his long and exemplary service as Park East Synagogue's Senior Rabbi, Rabbi Arthur Schneier is internationally known for his leadership on behalf of religious freedom, human rights and tolerance, with specific interest in China, Russia, Central Europe and the Balkans; he is the Founder and, since 1965, President of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation; and

WHEREAS, A Holocaust survivor, Rabbi Schneier is known as well, for his pioneering role in the struggle on behalf of Soviet Jewry and the rebuilding of Jewish religious life in Russia, the Ukraine and Eastern Europe; he has successfully negotiated the return of the Moscow Synagogue to the Jewish community and was instrumental in the restoration of the Ohel Rachel Synagogue in Shanghai and, as part of President Clinton's delegation to China, Rabbi Schneier was privileged to present the Ohel Rachel Synagogue with its first Torah scroll in more than 50 years, a Torah donated by Park East Synagogue; and

WHEREAS, A staunch supporter of Israel, he has had personal contacts with Prime Ministers Begin, Rabin, Shamir, Peres, Netanyahu, Barak and Sharon urging them to help in the struggle on behalf of Soviet Jewry and peace in the Middle East; and

WHEREAS, Appointed by President Reagan as a U.S. Alternate Representative to the U.N. General Assembly and by President George H. Bush as Chairman of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, Rabbi Schneier was one of three American religious leaders appointed by President Clinton in 1998 to start the first dialogue on religious freedom with President Jiang Zemin and other top Chinese leaders; he initiated the Resolution for the Protection of Religious Sites, adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 2001; and in 2004, he was named by President George W. Bush as a member of the U.S. delegation to the Stockholm International Forum for the Prevention of Genocide; and

WHEREAS, In addition, Rabbi Schneier was recently appointed by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan to the High-Level Group, Alliance of Civilizations, a distinguished group whose goal is to bridge divisions between societies exploited by extremists and among societies in which prejudices, misconceptions, and polarizations threaten international stability and peaceful relations; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi Schneier has himself convened six international conferences promoting peace and tolerance, including the 1999 Conference on

Peace and Tolerance in Vienna, where religious leaders of the Muslim, Serbian Orthodox and Catholic communities met face to face for the first time and, he has been a keynote speaker on Christian, Jewish and Muslim dialogue at numerous international conferences; and

WHEREAS, In April 2008, Rabbi Schneier hosted His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI during his historic and unprecedented visit to Park East Synagogue, marking the first time a Pope has visited a Synagogue in the United States and only the third time any Pope has ever visited a Jewish house of worship; and

WHEREAS, He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations; Asia Society; United Nations Development Corporation; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Committee on Conscience; Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations; and the Joint Distribution Committee; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi Schneier is, in addition, a Past President and Honorary Chairman of Religious Zionists of America and the Honorary Chairman of the World Jewish Congress American Section; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of the international esteem in which he is held, Rabbi Schneier is the recipient of The Grand Decoration of Honor in Gold with a Star for Service to the Republic of Austria; the Order of the Republic of Hungary; the Dr. Karl Renner Prize of the City of Vienna; the Moscow Patriarchate, Russian Orthodox Church's Order of St. Daniel of Moscow; and the Religious Liberty Award; and

WHEREAS, The recipient of eleven honorary doctoral degrees from American and European universities, Rabbi Schneier's alma mater, Yeshiva University, where he was ordained, honored him in 2004 when it established the Rabbi Arthur Schneier Center for International Affairs; and

WHEREAS, Rabbi Schneier was awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal by President William J. Clinton, citing him for "his service as an international envoy for four administrations" and as a Holocaust survivor, for "devoting a lifetime to overcoming forces of hatred and intolerance"; he is also the recipient of a U.S. Department of State Special Recognition Award for "...his ecumenical work in favor of mutual understanding, tolerance and peace...." to which he has devoted his life; and

WHEREAS, In addition, a bill, H.R. 3252, was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on October 24, 2011 to award a Congressional Gold Medal to Rabbi Arthur Schneier in recognition of his pioneering role in promoting religious freedom and human rights throughout the world, for close to a half century; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is pleased to extend its highest commendation to Rabbi Schneier for his dedication and commitment to his community and his faith and to the furtherance of freedom and tolerance throughout the world; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to pay tribute to Rabbi Arthur Schneier upon the occasion of the celebration, on March 18, 2012, of the 50th Anniversary of his installation as the Rabbi and spiritual leader of Park East Synagogue; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Rabbi Arthur Schneier.