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Trump urges Jewish Americans to observe ‘national Sabbath’ in Heritage Month proclamation

This year’s White House proclamation marks the first time that the call for a national Shabbat has been included



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President Donald Trump speaks during a swearing-in ceremony in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC, US, on Tuesday, March 24, 2026.

By [Emily Jacobs](#) · May 6, 2026

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Trump urges Jewish Americans to observe 'national Sabbath' in...

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President Donald Trump encouraged Jewish Americans to observe Shabbat next weekend in his Jewish American Heritage Month proclamation issued earlier this week, marking the first time a U.S. president has called for a national Shabbat.

The president wrote in [the proclamation](#), issued on Monday, that he urged American Jews to “observe a national Sabbath” from sundown on Friday, May 15, 2026, to sundown on Saturday, May 16, 2026. The Shabbat coincides with Rededicate 250, Trump’s national prayer event commemorating “250 glorious years of

American independence” as part of his Freedom 250 initiative, the public-private partnership overseeing the Semiquincentennial of the United States.

“Throughout this historic year, we rejoice in the triumph of the American spirit and rededicate ourselves to the cause of liberty and justice for all,” the proclamation reads. “From sundown on May 15 to nightfall on May 16, friends, families, and communities of all backgrounds may come together in gratitude for our great Nation. This day will recognize the sacred Jewish tradition of setting aside time for rest, reflection, and gratitude to the Almighty.”

“I call upon Americans to celebrate the heritage and contributions of Jewish Americans and to observe this month with appropriate programs, activities, and ceremonies,” it continues. “I further call on all Americans to celebrate their faith and freedom throughout this year, during this month, and especially on Shabbat to celebrate our 250th year.”

The decree went on to highlight the resilient nature of the Jewish people and encourage religious tolerance.

“This month, we celebrate the contributions that Jewish Americans have made to our way of life, we honor their role in shaping the story of our Nation, and we remember that religious devotion, learning, and service to others are enduring pillars of a thriving culture,” it read. “Through every trial and triumph, the contributions of Jewish Americans have shaped our past, have strengthened our communities, and will continue to inspire American greatness for generations to come.”

U.S. presidents have been recognizing Jewish American Heritage Month annually since 2006, the result of a bipartisan, bicameral push by Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL) and the late Sen. Arlen Specter, who was a Republican at the time. Wasserman Schultz has led the House resolution recognizing Jewish American Heritage Month every year since.

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A source who engaged with the White House as they were drafting the proclamation and planning Rededicate 250 told *Jewish Insider* that the White House Faith Office made overtures to several Jewish leaders to inquire about “what would be appropriate to do for people who are Jewish.” The office, the source said, “emphasized that this was a directive from the president. He asked them to make sure that Jewish Americans are comfortable at this faithful celebration.”

“They floated various ideas, but they discussed how they would like to do something that would be comfortable for Jewish people. They thought it would be a good idea to mark Shabbat,” the source said, adding that officials with the Faith Office “conveyed to us that this idea of helping ensure there will be something for the people of the Jewish faith came from the president.”

The White House did not respond to JI’s request for comment, though Freedom 250 CEO Keith Krach — the former DocuSign chairman and Ariba co-founder who served as undersecretary of state for economic growth, energy, and the environment in the first Trump administration — released a statement celebrating the news.

“This national observance is a moment to step away from the noise, reflect, and give thanks as we prepare to mark 250 years of American independence,” Krach said. “It honors the enduring contributions of Jewish Americans and offers a simple but powerful chance for people of all backgrounds to come together, unite in prayer, and remember the freedom that binds us as a nation.”

The announcement was also lauded by several Orthodox leaders.

Rabbi Levi Shemtov, the executive vice president of American Friends of Lubavitch (Chabad), heralded the development, telling JI that the Trump White House has been especially accommodating to the Jewish

community.

“This White House is one of the most openly and obviously religious White Houses in many years. I have noticed an unprecedented and extraordinary effort to ensure a particular comfort level for Jewish Americans,” Shemtov told JI. “I’ve been invited to the White House on many occasions in various administrations. I’ve been invited several times in this administration, and every time, when we review what I’m going to do, they say I should do what makes me religiously comfortable.”

“I’ve been asked several times to participate in events,” he continued of this administration, “I was told each time that I should pray the way which I feel comfortable and that it’s important to them that people of the Jewish faith feel comfortable practicing our faith in whatever way we want.”

Stephen Flatow, president of the Religious Zionists of America – Mizrahi, released a statement calling the inclusion of a national Shabbat in the proclamation “especially appropriate.”

“The president’s proclamation is a meaningful tribute to the Jewish role in the American story and to America’s historic promise of religious liberty,” Flatow said. “For generations, Jews in America have been blessed with the freedom to build synagogues, educate our children, observe Shabbat and contribute fully to the civic life of this great country.”

“As America prepares to mark 250 years of independence, the call for a national Shabbat of gratitude is especially appropriate,” he added. “Shabbat is not merely a day of rest. It is one of the great pillars of Jewish faith, family and continuity. America gave Jews the freedom to keep Shabbat; Shabbat gave Jews the strength to remain Jews.”

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