



DOV HIKIND
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September 6, 2017

Governor Phil Scott
109 State Street, Pavilion
Montpelier, VT 05609

Dear Governor Scott,

I have often visited the beautiful State of Vermont and found its citizens to be warm and friendly. Unfortunately, I am writing to bring your attention to a shocking incident that happened to my constituents when they recently traveled through Vermont.

Rabbi Berl Fink, age 60, a noted scholar and author who resides in Brooklyn, and his wife Blimie Fink, a school principal, were traveling with their two children on Monday evening, August 7. At approximately 11:30 pm, they were on the I-91 N near the Fairlee, Vermont exit when they noticed a police car with flashing lights on the side of the road. They moved into the left lane, as the law requires in New York, to pass the car safely, then returned to the right lane. Moments later, a police car appeared behind them. When they realized that they were being asked to pull over, they immediately did so.

After parking on the shoulder, Mr. Fink was told by an enraged State Trooper to exit his vehicle. At gun point, he was ordered to get on the ground and was subsequently handcuffed and frisked. While this unfolded, Mrs. Fink and the rest of her family, fearing that they were being abducted, dialed 911. Her son, also at gunpoint, was ordered out of the car, tackled, then handcuffed. Mrs. Fink and her teenage daughter were ordered out of the car and Mrs. Fink was handcuffed. The officers repeatedly asked if they had weapons and began searching the car. Twenty minutes after placing Mr. Fink in a squad car, the officers changed their minds, released the family and stated that they needed to respond to another, more urgent call. Mr. Fink was then issued a summons for eluding a police officer (attached).

My constituents' dress made it clear that they were Hassidic Jews, a sight that may be uncommon in Vermont but one that is hardly a crime. While it would be difficult to mistake the Fink family as people who might pose a danger to police officers, they were subjected to having guns pointed at them, being handcuffed, terrorized and humiliated.

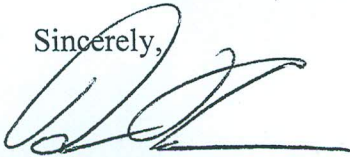
The Finks called the State Police the next day to lodge a complaint. They spoke with Sergeant Lyle Becker who told them the incident occurred because the trooper thought Mr. Fink was drunk and had been weaving between lanes, yet no breathalyzer test was

Mr. Fink was drunk and had been weaving between lanes, yet no breathalyzer test was administered at the scene. The Sergeant also told the Finks that they had been speeding, yet no speeding ticket was issued.

This entire incident has left the Fink family traumatized and fearful of travel. I am horrified by the treatment my constituents were subjected to and deeply troubled that it may have been a bias incident prompted by their mode of dress. I am appalled that any family would be treated like this when it is clearly apparent they were not even suspected of criminal activity.

I am demanding an immediate investigation into the violation of my constituent's civil rights. I look forward to an expeditious response from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dov Hikind', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dov Hikind
Member of Assembly