

Deborah Lipstadt confirmed as US antisemitism envoy

by [Yonat Shimron](#) in the [May 4, 2022](#) issue



(AP Photo/Andrew Harnik)

Following an eight-month delay, on March 30 the US Senate unanimously confirmed noted antisemitism scholar Deborah Lipstadt to be the State Department's special envoy to combat and monitor antisemitism.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved the nomination one day earlier, with only two Republican senators, Mitt Romney from Utah and Marco Rubio from Florida, voting in favor.

Biden had nominated Lipstadt in July to lead the State Department's office for combating antisemitism. Jewish groups across the spectrum hailed the nomination and strongly advocated for Lipstadt, an Emory University professor who has taught about antisemitism for 40 years and published numerous books on the subject. Last

year, she served as an expert witness in the Charlottesville civil suit against the organizers of the Unite the Right rally that turned deadly.

But Lipstadt's nomination languished after Sen. Ron Johnson (R., Wisc.) objected to her nomination. He was offended, he said, by a tweet she wrote in which she said his comments about the January 6 insurrection amounted to "white supremacy/nationalism."

The special envoy's office was established in 2004. In response to a growing threat of antisemitism globally over the past five years, Congress elevated the position to the rank of ambassador last year. That requires full Senate confirmation.

The position, located at the State Department, is intended to advance US foreign policy on antisemitism.

Lipstadt's credentials are not much debated. She is best known for winning a libel case in the United Kingdom filed by Holocaust denier David Irving. The story of the case inspired the 2016 movie Denial, in which Lipstadt was portrayed by actor Rachel Weisz. Lipstadt is a professor of modern Jewish history and Holocaust studies.

The Biden administration appointed Aaron Keyak, a former House staffer who served as Jewish outreach director for Biden's campaign team, as Lipstadt's deputy last November. —Religion News Service