

# BULLETIN

## Polish American Congress of Eastern Massachusetts April 2007

### 1. UPDATE: VISA WAIVER FOR POLAND STATE RESOLUTION CAMPAIGN

As of April 4, 2007, the state legislature of **Arizona** became the eleventh to have passed ó since May 2004 -- Joint and other Resolutions in support of Poland being admitted to the Visa Waiver Program of the United States Department of State. All told, these eleven legislatures represent states where according to the 2000 United States Census just over half (i.e., **4,516,708**) or 50.3% of our nation's total number of **8,977,444** Polish Americans live and vote:

**Massachusetts**, 323,210 Polish Americans: (Joint Resolution, May 2004)  
**New Jersey**, 576,473 Polish Americans: (Joint Resolution, October 2004)  
**Vermont**, 20,484 Polish Americans: (Joint Resolution, January 2005)  
**Pennsylvania**, 824,146 Polish Americans: (Senate, February 2005; House, April, 2005)  
**Connecticut**, 284,272 Polish Americans: (Senate, May 2005)  
**Maine**, 24,982 Polish Americans: (Joint Resolution, May 2005)  
**Nebraska**, 62,475 Polish Americans: (Unicameral Resolution, June 2005)  
**New York**, 986,141 Polish Americans: (Joint Resolution, June 2005)  
**Ohio**, 433,016 Polish Americans: (Joint Resolution, June 2005)  
**Michigan**, 854,844 Polish Americans: (Joint Resolution, June 2006)  
**Arizona**, 126,665 Polish Americans: (Joint Resolution, April 2007)

Somewhat of an irony created by the passage of the Visa Waiver for Poland Joint Resolution in Arizona's state legislature occurred after the fact of Republican Presidential candidate John McCain's failure to vote in the United States Senate a few weeks earlier for the passage of Bill **S.4** that contained the Voinovich/Collins amendments providing for the admission of Poland to the Visa Waiver Program. The Senate voted 60 to 38 in favor of passage. McCain's colleague from Arizona, Senator Jon Kyl, voted against S.4, further adding to the irony.

Though most of the Senators who voted against S.4 were Republicans, ten Republicans nonetheless voted in favor of S.4; they were Senators Coleman (Minnesota), Collins (Maine), Dole (North Carolina), Inouye (Hawaii), Murkowski (Alaska), Smith (Oregon), Snowe (Maine), Specter (Pennsylvania), Stevens (Alaska), and Voinovich (Ohio). Worthy of note was the fact that in 2005 the state legislatures of Maine and Ohio passed Resolutions supporting Poland's admission to the Visa Waiver Program

The United States House of Representatives is considering passage of its own version of a similar Bill, **H.R. 1**. Though similar, but not a duplicate, the House Bill will require considerable review, discussion, and modification by those members of both federal legislative branches who support Poland and other nations being admitted to the Visa Waiver Program. Shortly after the Easter recess, both the Senate and the House of Representatives will assign some of their members to a Conference Committee whose objective will be to explore possible agreement on expansion of the Visa Waiver Program as well as other measures concerning immigration and national security in the House Bill.

At the beginning of March 2007, the House of Representatives in the Arizona state legislature voted unanimously to support Visa Waiver for Poland legislation introduced by Representative John Kavanagh. Representative Kavanagh is devoid of Polish ancestry, but he took on the role of sponsor at the request of Mr. Bogumil Horchem, President of the Arizona Division of the Polish American Congress. Earlier in October 2006 at the National Directors Meeting of the Polish American Congress that took place in San Diego, California, Horchem answered an appeal made by National Vice President for American Affairs Anthony J. Bajdek, who has orchestrated the national drive in state legislatures for the passage of Visa Waiver for Poland Resolutions. Bajdek and Horchem concluded that the best approach was to collect signatures on petitions for use in Arizona and then present them to the most likely supporters, namely, two Polish-surnamed legislators, Representatives Bill Konopnicki and Tom Prezelski. To his amazement and disappointment, Horchem and his delegation of some twenty fellow-Polish

Americans found Konopnicki and Prezelski unsupportive during a face-to-face meeting in the state capital, despite the fact that Horchem had presented for their consideration over 1000 signatures that he had collected on petitions urging the state legislature to adopt and pass a Visa Waiver for Poland Resolution.

Luckily for Horchem and Polonia, what attracted a sponsor for the Visa Waiver for Poland Resolution was the fact that both Horchem and Representative John Kavanagh were members of the Knights of Columbus in the same parish. Another irony, therefore, was that after being turned down by the two Polish American state legislators, Horchem found a champion in his own parish, and the champion was an Irish American.

In Texas at the same time, Dr. Marian Kruzel, President of the Texas Division of the Polish American Congress, had been and continues to follow up on his volunteering to Bajdek in San Diego in October 2006 to bring Texas into the list of states passing Visa Waiver for Poland Resolutions. Though he tried on several occasions to enlist the support of Senator Kyle Janek in the state legislature, his efforts were not successful. However, upon approaching his district Representative in the House of Representatives, Hubert Vo, Dr. Kruzel attracted a sympathetic response. Representative Vo is a Vietnamese American.

Sad to say, it has become evident to Dean Bajdek in his national quest that some American politicians of Polish descent who become elected officials at the state level do not necessarily support legislative initiatives of interest to Polish Americans and of benefit to Poland as the preceding illustrates. In Maryland's state legislature, further, Representative Carolyn Krysiak is yet another example of a disinterested Polish American. In New Hampshire's state legislature, Representatives William Buty ski, Carolyn Gargas, and Angeline Kopka are added examples. Yet, we Americans enjoy living in a democracy wherein every individual is entitled to his or her opinion, politicians included. This is precisely the reason why concerned Polish American voters in all states must not be shy about educating their elected officials in state legislatures on matters of interest to Polish Americans and of benefit to Poland.

In Illinois, a Visa Waiver for Poland Resolution has been sponsored finally by Senator J. Bradley Burzy ski and was referred to committee, a standard procedural requirement, where it currently awaits a decision, that being, to be referred out of committee to the legislature for discussion and vote. Well over a year ago, Barbara (Matusik) Miller, a National Director of the Polish American Congress and the Treasurer of the Polish Women's Alliance of America, set up a telephone conference call involving herself, Senator Burzy ski, and Dean Bajdek. During that telephone call, Senator Burzy ski agreed to sponsor a Visa Waiver for Poland Resolution in the Illinois legislature. Last month, his Resolution was referred to the Rules Committee.

Being referred to committee is a standard legislative procedure. But the committees utilized in state legislatures are not uniform across the United States. So whereas the Rules Committee is reviewing Senator Burzy ski's Resolution in Illinois, in Connecticut a similar Resolution was referred to the Government Administration and Finance Committee, and in Arizona, to the National Security and Property Rights Committee. The objective of a sponsor whose proposed legislation is referred to committee is to have it referred out of committee as soon as possible. In Michigan, Representative Steve Bieda's Visa Waiver for Poland Resolution of 2005 sat in committee for nearly a year before being referred out of committee and then successfully passed as a Joint Resolution in June 2006. Supporting the on-site efforts by fellow Polish American Congress National Director Jerry Surowiec, Bajdek pressed Bieda not to allow the reviewing committee to condemn the Resolution to die in committee. To ignore a proposed piece of legislation so that it dies in committee is a strategy employed by unsympathetic legislative power brokers and tangential lobbyists.

It is highly unlikely that Senator Burzy ski's Visa Waiver for Poland Resolution will die in the Rules Committee because the chairperson of that Committee is a personal friend of Barbara (Matusik) Miller. However, as the old American expression goes, "you never know" when it comes to politics.

In conclusion, states having Divisions of the Polish American Congress but yet to pass Visa Waiver for Poland Resolutions are **California** (491,325 Polish Americans), **Delaware** (40,636), **Florida** (429,621), **Illinois** (932,996), **Indiana** (183,989), **Maryland** (184,364), **Rhode Island** (43,159), and **Texas** (228,309). The process to have them, and other states, pass Visa Waiver for Poland Resolutions will continue to be the work of Dean Anthony J. Bajdek of Massachusetts until the United States House of Representatives also passes a version of Bill **H.R. 1** favorable to bringing Poland into our nation's Visa Waiver Program, as is worthy of a proven friend and loyal ally of the United States of America.

Remember always, that the entire process began in Massachusetts when the legislature passed the first-in-the-nation Visa Waiver for Poland Joint Resolution in May 2004.

## **2. PAC/E. MASS. URGES POLONIA TO MEET AND HONOR MEMBERS OF THE NEW 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY "POLISH CAUCUS" IN THE MASSACHUSETTS LEGISLATURE WHO SPONSORED THE FIRST-IN-THE-NATION VISA WAIVER FOR POLAND JOINT RESOLUTION AND WILL WORK TO SUPPORT OTHER POLONIA ISSUES**

On Thursday, May 3, 2007, members of the Polish Caucus in both the Senate (Michael R. Knapik and Richard T. Moore) and House of Representatives (Michael Kane, Peter V. Kocot, Stephen Kulik, John W. Scibak, and Joseph F. Wagner) will host the annual State observance of Poland's Constitution of May 3, 1791 at 11:00 a.m. at the Grand Staircase on the second floor of the State House in Boston. The event will be sponsored by both the Eastern and Western Divisions of the Polish American Congress in Massachusetts.

The proposition to establish a Polish Caucus in the Massachusetts legislature was made by Dean Anthony J. Bajdek, President of the Eastern Massachusetts Division, and Mr. Joseph Kos, President of the Western Massachusetts Division to legislators in a meeting at the State House on February 28, 2007. Upon agreeing to the proposition, Massachusetts legislators of Polish descent and those of other descents sympathetic to issues concerning Polish American constituents and Poland thereby established the first-in-the-nation 21<sup>st</sup> century Polish Caucus among all fifty state legislatures in the United States.

The Massachusetts legislature, moreover, should be recognized for establishing Polonia-related traditions for being first. Among them was the passage of the first-in-the-nation Visa Waiver for Poland Resolution in 2004 and now establishing the first-in-the-nation 21<sup>st</sup> century Polish Caucus in 2007. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Massachusetts legislature established Polish Constitution Day (1955), Tadeusz Kosciuszko Day (1977), and Polish American Heritage Month (1996) in its General Laws.

And of course, whereas Massachusetts was the first to fight in 1775 at the outset of America's War of Independence, Poland similarly was the first to fight in 1939 at the outset of World War II.

As for the Polish American Congress nationally, it is today the only major Polonia organization leading the fight to achieve Visa Waiver status for Poland.

Polish Americans and their friends of other ethnicities state-wide are urged to display their appreciation to the Polish Caucus and the Polish American Congress by attending the State House observance and celebration on May 3. Please demonstrate *your* appreciation by planning to be at the State House on May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **3. POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS TO SPONSOR AN OCTOBER 1, 2008 OBSERVANCE IN VIRGINIA OF THE 400<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARRIVAL OF POLISH COLONISTS IN THE JAMESTOWN COLONY.**

At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Polish American Congress held in Chicago on April 4, 2007, an agreement was reached to hold the fall meeting of the National Directors in Williamsburg, Virginia, in proximity to the original site of the Jamestown Colony that was established in 1607 by an initiative of England and that involved the first English colonists of North America. A year later in 1608, the population of the small colony was augmented by the arrival of some German and Polish colonists as well. Invitations to address the National Directors during the October 1-3 Meeting will be sent to both the final Democratic and Republican candidates for the Presidency of the United States, given that 2008 is a Presidential election year.

Among the major participants in the 2008 Observance will be the Presidents of the United States, Poland, and Germany.

To commemorate this milestone 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Polish American Congress will recommend to the United States Postal Service that an appropriate English-German-Polish-presence-in-Jamestown stamp be issued.

## **4. POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS NATIONALLY TO INITIATE PROCESS FOR BECOMING A 501 (c) 3 ENTITY**

At the same Executive Committee meeting held in Chicago on April 4, the Executive Committee agreed that the Polish American Congress should initiate the process for becoming a 501 (c) 3 organization, thereby becoming tax-exempt. As of the moment, its Polish American Congress Charitable Foundation (PACCF) enjoys that status, allowing deduction of donations on federal income tax filings. As the founder of the PACCF, the PAC plans to define itself primarily as an organization structured to educate politicians, elected public officials, and the general public on issues of concern to Polish Americans voters and Poland. Achieving 501 (c) 3 status for the PAC will influence subordinate state divisions as well.

## **5. POLISH EMBASSY ENLISTS LAW FIRM TO PROMOTE ITS INTERESTS ON CAPITOL HILL**

To further add to its strength in promoting its interests in the halls of the United States Congress on Capitol Hill, the Polish Embassy ó together with the Embassies of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, and Romania ó has engaged the law firm, Dutko Worldwide.

## **6. PAC/E. MASS. BIENNIAL ELECTION FOR OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR THE 2007-2009 TERM OF OFFICE**

All members of the Polish American Congress of Eastern Massachusetts in good standing (i.e., up-to-date in the payment of annual dues) are both eligible to vote in the biennial election/annual meeting to be held on June 9, 2007 in room 440 Egan Center, Northeastern University, Boston, starting at 9:30 a.m., and to stand as candidates for office if they are so inclined. In the case of the latter, interested individuals should plan to notify Attorney Mark P. Szpak by e-mail at [MSzpak@ropesgray.com](mailto:MSzpak@ropesgray.com).

## **7. PAC/E. MASS. URGES ALL AMERICAN CITIZENS, THOSE OF POLISH ANCESTRY INCLUDED, TO REGISTER AND TO VOTE**

If eligible Polish Americans fail to register and vote regularly in city, state, and national elections, elected officials are likely not to pay attention to their concerns. The õPartisansö imbroglio of 2005-2006 was perhaps the best local example of that malaise. Though we live in a democracy where one has the right not to vote if so inclined, failure to vote is a waste of a Constitutional right, on one hand, and a deficiency destructive of cultivating civic virtue, on the other. If we Polish Americans fail to register and vote in substantial numbers, we shouldn't be surprised to see our concerns ignored, trivialized, or held in disregard by our federal and state elected officials.

Do the right thing when it comes to an obligation of citizenship in our American democracy: *register and vote regularly*.

## **8. A REMINDER THAT IT IS TIME TO RENEW ANNUAL DUES FOR 2008**

The Polish American Congress depends on its members for the financial support required to fulfill its mission. As of the moment, the issue of Visa Waiver status for Poland is a good example. If you haven't yet renewed your annual dues for 2008, please do so now. Thank you.