



# **BULLETIN**

## **January 2009**

### **1. TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE: ON EVE OF ELECTION, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE JOHN MCCAIN SUPPORTS VISA WAIVER STATUS FOR POLAND**

**In an October 29, 2008 letter addressed to Frank J. Spula, President of the Polish American Congress, Senator John McCain spoke clearly about where he stood on the issue of admitting Poland to the United States Department of State's Visa Waiver Program:**

“I share your concern about Poland’s exclusion from the U.S. visa waiver program. Poland is not only a steadfast and valued ally of the United States, we have the potential of growing to be much closer partners than we are now. Requiring visas from Poles seeking to travel here is inconsistent with our current relationship, not to mention the deeper and broader relationship we must work together to foster. I support the inclusion of Poland in the visa waiver program and will make it a top priority of my administration to make it happen.

Poland is a friend and partner to the United States. We have worked together to bring peaceful democratic change in Europe, we have fought together in Iraq and Afghanistan to make the world safer, we are cooperating to fight terrorism and organized crime, we are taking the hard decisions like missile defense that will better protect our countries, and we are standing together now to support the fledgling democracy in Georgia against intimidation and aggression by Russia.

These factors should have been weighted in the judgment about Poland’s status. When I am President, I will revisit Poland’s exclusion from the visa waiver program as a priority. It is important not only as a symbol of the deep friendship between the United States and Poland, but for the commerce, tourism and family gatherings that Poles and Polish Americans benefit from.

Thank you and the Polish American Congress for being a strong voice of freedom, of human rights, of spreading democracy, of the cultural heritage of Polish Americans and their current contributions in all these areas. America is enriched and strengthened by your activities.”

Though Senator McCain lost to Senator Obama, his continued forceful, straight-talking support for Poland in the United States Senate will be absolutely necessary to overcome the not-always-transparent obstruction orchestrated principally by Democratic Senator Diane Feinstein of California.

## **2. PRESIDENT SPULA CONGRATULATES PRESIDENT-ELECT OBAMA**

**In a letter dated November 5, 2008, Polish American Congress President Frank J. Spula sent the following letter to President-elect Obama:**

“On behalf of the Polish American Congress, one of the largest and oldest Polish American organizations in our country, I would like to extend our warmest congratulations and fervent hopes for a successful 44<sup>th</sup> Presidency.

The Polish American Congress has for more than six decades fought for freedom and the equality of man in Poland, the United States and around the world.

We look forward to working with you and the leadership of the U.S. House and Senate to move forward an agenda that reflects that tradition and carries it forward under your leadership.

Once again, congratulations on your truly impressive victory and the vote of confidence placed in you by the American people.”

## **3. VISA WAIVER FOR POLAND AND TIME-TESTED AMERICAN POLITICAL MAXIMS**

**Under the captioned title above, National Vice President for American Affairs Anthony J. Bajdek sent the following message to National Directors on October 22, 2008:**

“While my wife and I had been traveling in Poland and Lithuania in September of this year, a Polish Lithuanian friend in the Foreign Ministry of Lithuania informed us during dinner in his home that whereas Lithuania would be admitted to our Department of State's Visa Waiver Program by the end of this year, Poland would not.

Having devoted considerable time on the state legislative level via passage of Visa Waiver for Poland Resolutions to bring pressure to bear on the President and Congress of the United States to admit Poland - a proven friend and loyal ally of the United States - to the Visa Waiver Program, hearing that Poland would not yet be granted that honor from yet another source was disheartening. Some might consider the latest denial of Visa Waiver admission for Poland equivalent to a knock-down punch. Some may consider it insulting and a kick in the teeth, as I do. It was a knock-down punch, and is insulting and a kick in the teeth as well. At the same time, however, it strengthened my resolve to stand up, fight back, and continue the struggle.

We must understand that Visa Waiver for Poland is a campaign, and not a loser-loses-all battle. That's what fires me up.

From her vantage-point in Washington, DC, Barbara Borzuchowska Andersen has just provided us with a well-written, comprehensive review and insightful commentary on our struggle as it pertains to related Polish American Congress involvement with the federal level of government.

I wish to add my own reflections.

The latest message on our PAC\_ND site about the White House assuring President Frank Spula that President Bush's support for Poland's admission to the Visa Waiver Program has been obviated by Congressional reluctance to make it a reality brings me to the second half of the title of my message to you, my fellow National Directors.

Americans are well-versed with two time-tested maxims about politics in the United States. One of the maxims holds that 'all politics is local', the other holds that 'all politics is dirty'.

Let's examine the first of those two maxims as they relate to everything that I have been pursuing apart from and engaged in during our CND meetings for several years.

If we accept the fact that indeed all politics is local in nature, the foundation of political life in the United States rests not with Washington, DC but rather with our united fifty states that collectively constitute our great American republic and our great American democracy. Clearly, there is a symbiotic relationship between America's fifty states, their legislatures, and their Congressional Delegations in Washington, DC.

Today as in the past, the Polish American Congress is capable of exercising limited influence in the United States Congress because we are represented in only seventeen states (eighteen if we consider the legislative districts of Virginia contiguous to Washington, DC that are included in the territorial scope and mandate of our Metropolitan Washington Area Division) and the District of Columbia. What this means is that, at most, we can approach -- as legitimate constituents -- 36 of the 100 members of the United States Senate. The other 64 Senators are under no obligation to respond to our pleading, for example, that they support legislation to admit Poland to the Visa Waiver Program of the Department of State.

Practical reality, however, erodes that 36 Senator count. Consider, for example, Maryland. With that Division on the verge of extinction, we lose over time directly influencing as constituents, 2 Senators, even though one of them is Barbara Mikulski (what happens after her Senatorial service ends, one may ask). Furthermore, with no one ever coming to our CND meetings from our Rhode Island Division and Florida, for example, it appears that nothing may have been done to influence their combined 4 Senators in recent years. That brings the number down from 36 to 30. If some of us are not active in engaging our Senators in Washington, DC, the number is further eroded. I could say the same for Texas, Delaware, and so on. I hope that you see my point.

There is yet another unfortunate reality when it comes to our influence as constituents from states having Divisions of the Polish American Congress. Let's consider California where we have two Divisions. All Californians - Polish Americans included - are constituents of Senator Diane Feinstein (as well as her Senate colleague, Barbara Boxer). Have at the least our two

California Division Presidents written to Senator Feinstein or visited her California office expressing their dismay over the fact that she continues to be the major Congressional opponent, not only of Poland's admission to the Visa Waiver Program and the Program's expansion but also to the concept and continuation of the Program itself? I stand corrected willingly and apologetically if such letters have been issued or visit made.

Given Senator Feinstein's obstruction to Poland's admission to the Program, perhaps things could have been different had the California Divisions collaborated for a focused visit or two or three to Sacramento in recent years to spend at least one day per visit lobbying their state Representatives and Senators for sponsoring and passing a Visa Waiver for Poland Resolution as other legislatures had done - only because the Polish American Congress led the campaign for passage of such "all politics is local" legislation in:

Massachusetts (Joint Resolution: May 2004)

New Jersey (Joint Resolution: October 2004)

Vermont (Joint Resolution: January 2005)

Pennsylvania (Joint Resolution: April 2005)

Connecticut (Senate Resolution: May 2005)

Maine (Joint Resolution: May 2005)

Nebraska (Unicameral Resolution: June 2005)

New York (Joint Resolution: June 2005)

Ohio (Joint Resolution: June 2005)

Michigan (Joint Resolution: June 2006)

Arizona (Joint Resolution: April 2007)

Illinois (Joint Resolution: October 2007)

And please remember, Vermont, Maine, and Nebraska do not have Polish American Congress Divisions! Passage of Visa Waver for Poland Resolutions in those three states didn't happen in a vacuum. Passage occurred because a National Director (i.e., me) of the Polish American Congress approached legislators with the idea. I had also done so in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Michigan (in support of fellow National Director Jerry Surowiec), Arizona (in support of fellow National Director Nick Horchem), and Illinois (in support of fellow National Director Barbara Matusik Miller).

Since 2004, all Divisions of the Polish American Congress have had the opportunity to engage in

the campaign to fight for Poland's admission to the Visa Waiver Program. All Divisions, however, did not engage in the campaign.

Had California's legislature passed a Visa Waiver for Poland Resolution, Senator Diane Feinstein of the state's Congressional Delegation in Washington, DC would have had to ignore the wishes of her colleagues who sponsored and passed the Resolution in California's state legislature.

Similarly, Senator Feinstein would have had to ignore the wishes of many of her fellow Californians in the United States House of Representatives who number 53 out of the 435 members of the House and who may have been sympathetic to support their state's Resolution in the United States Congress. California, by far, has the largest Congressional Delegation in Washington, DC. Our California Divisions should view this as an opportunity.

Though we can only speculate what the outcome of such a Visa Waiver for Poland Resolution originating in the state legislature of California would likely have had on Senator Feinstein, one thing is certain, it would have made her uncomfortable about voting against her "grass-roots" state-level colleagues in Sacramento and fellow Congressional members representing California on Capitol Hill.

Time, however, still remains for our California Divisions to begin the process that could well lead to passage of a Visa Waiver for Poland Resolution by first conducting a "Polish American Congress Days at the State House" as I again urged all Divisions to do in Williamsburg on October 2.

But California should not be perceived as our only state in need of political activism on the state level of government. Though Florida, Texas, Delaware, Maryland, and Rhode Island, for example, may not have an equivalent-in-outlook and disposition person to Diane Feinstein in the United States Senate, implementation of a "Polish American Congress Day at the State House" in 2009 in Tallahassee, Austin, Dover, Annapolis, and Providence respectively would also act to fill the current regrettable void. The same holds true for the balance of our Divisions.

In all of this, please remember also that 60% of the members of the United States Congress (i.e., House of Representatives and Senate) originate in the legislative and executive branches of state government for the most part. I view this as a great opportunity for the Polish American Congress, provided we do something (e.g., "Polish American Congress Day at the State House") to exploit that fact.

Finally, I approach the second time-tested maxim of American political life, that being the widely-held belief that "all politics is dirty".

Political life correlates with and thrives on compromise. If it didn't, unfortunately, nothing could be accomplished legislatively. What about adherence to principle, integrity, even-handedness, and honesty one may ask? They are all highly commendable traits in politicians and political parties. However, all politicians are merely human and equally subject to the same human limitations and weaknesses that we all possess, and all political parties are led by such all-too-human politicians. Thus skillful politicians compromise in pursuit of a legislative objective.

Some politicians deviate from the ideal of even-handed service by allowing themselves to be compromised as the result of a wide-range of personal proclivities, shortsightedness, and prejudice. This is a natural human limitation, all one has to do is to study history carefully, our own as well as that of the world.

Therefore, we have to assume that the reluctance of a good many members of the United States Congress to admit Poland to the Visa Waiver Program may well be motivated either by transparent or not-so-transparent negative perceptions of Poland and sorry to say, prejudice against Poland. This Congressional malaise, at least from the point of view of this member of the Polish American Congress, equates with the "all politics is dirty" maxim.

Even within the maxim, however, there are degrees of politics being "dirty", and neither do I intend nor have the time to comprehensively pursue the topic as a doctoral dissertation-like monograph in these reflections.

How do you fight "dirty" politics? First of all, don't be infuriated, anxious, timid, repulsed, appalled, or intimidated.

Be smart.

Remember the civil rights expression, "we shall overcome."

Remember that the Polish American Congress is a work in progress. Being a work in progress is a healthy aspect of organizational development and behavior, and is conducive to longevity.

If the PAC survives into the unknown distant future it will be because it is a dynamic rather than static organization, always adapting to changing times in an increasingly complicated world.

If the PAC survives into the unknown distant future it will be because it fully realizes the absolute necessity of expanding its Divisions to as many states as possible - Hawaii included - because there are Polish Americans in every state in not inconsiderable numbers. So, for example, even if the state of Hawaii only has 10,770 Polish Americans according to the 2000 United States Census - all we need is 20 to 30 Polish Americans dedicated and loyal to the mission of the Polish American Congress to exert influence regularly on their state legislature and their Congressional Delegation in Washington, DC in matters of interest to Polish Americans and Poland.

If the PAC survives into the unknown distant future it will be because it fully realizes the wisdom of engaging its Divisions nation-wide in both annual "Polish American Congress Day at the State House" activity on the state level and "Polish American Congress Day on Capitol Hill" activity on the federal level.

In the next several weeks, I will be in contact with all Division Presidents about piloting their first "Polish American Congress Day at the State House" in 2009. Moreover, the process for piloting our first "Polish American Congress Day on Capitol Hill" has already begun, and in this

regard, I thank both Drs. Susanne Lotarski and Barbara Borzuchowska Andersen for their input and willingness to volunteer their services in support of this critically necessary initiative in which the Executive Committee and Division Presidents will participate.

In keeping with my reflections, I wish to publicly commend Nick Horchem, President of our Arizona Division, who responded to my call to arms in Williamsburg by volunteering to begin the process for exploring the possibility to establish new Divisions in New Mexico and Nevada where he has contacts with other Polish Americans. In similar fashion, I again thank Virginia Sikora who well prior to our CND meeting in Williamsburg provided me a contact in Nebraska who is inclined to establish a new Division there as well.

I will continue working with Representative Edward J. Mazurek of Maine's House of Representatives to create a new Division in that state. In addition, I hope to devote time for developing a working contact in Minnesota.

If you have contacts in any other non-PAC states please let me know.

In all of this, finally, I had hoped and still hope that Poland itself will employ every opportunity to press the United States on the issue of Visa Waiver status. I say this because in the winter of 2006 when President Kaczynski met President Bush in the White House, he never brought up the subject according to Embassy sources following a dinner in the Blair House that I and other PAC delegates attended. I was stunned and disappointed to hear that. More recently, I had hoped that in finalizing negotiations for the United States - Poland Agreement to deploy an American anti-missile system on Polish soil, a provision for Visa Waiver status would have been included. This clearly either hadn't occurred or was rejected by American negotiators.

Now Poland finds itself included in another group of Visa Waiver candidates, one of which is Romania. Poland and Romania. Some combination. Depressing thoughts of Ceausescu and his ilk notwithstanding, our campaign must continue, and we must be smart about engaging it, not only with regard to Visa Waiver status for Poland but also for the continued strength, influence, longevity, and success of the Polish American Congress. This is our obligation as National Directors.

At this point, I believe that you have heard enough from me on this matter. In this regard, I thank you for taking the time to consider my Visa Waiver for Poland reflections. In this regard as well, I apologize if my comments especially about California in particular may be viewed as overly critical. Criticism was not my intent because I am reluctant to criticize volunteers, and all of us in the Polish American Congress are volunteers.”

#### **4. LEGISLATORS ON BEACON HILL WORKING WITH THE POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS FOR THE ENACTMENT INTO LAW OF A POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS DAY IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.**

Since its founding in Eastern Massachusetts in 1945, successive generations of the leadership of the Polish American Congress prevailed on the Massachusetts legislature to enact legislation

celebrating aspects of Polish history and culture. Therefore, under Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 6, the Commonwealth formally recognizes and celebrates:

- Section 12R. **POLISH CONSTITUTION DAY**. Enacted in 1953. Applicable annually in May.
- Section 12B. **TADEUSZ KOŚCIUSZKO DAY**. Enacted in 1977. Applicable annually in February.
- Section 15WWW. **POLISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH**. Enacted in 1996. Applicable annually in October.

As the natural progression beyond the April 2008 passage by the Massachusetts Legislature of a Joint Resolution honoring the Polish American Congress in the state, PAC/E. Mass. President Anthony J. Bajdek has proposed to the members of the Legislature's Polish Legislative Caucus that a **POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS DAY** be enacted into statute under Massachusetts General Laws as well.

Accordingly, Representative John Scibak, the leader of the Caucus, who has worked on other legislative issues with Bajdek, will be filing proposed legislation early in 2009 as follows:

**SECTION 1. Chapter 6 of the Massachusetts General Laws, as appearing in the 2002 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after Section 15CCCC, the following Section:**

**The Governor shall annually issue a proclamation setting apart (date yet to be determined) as POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS DAY, in recognition of the capacity of the Polish American Congress beginning in 1944 to represent the domestic and international concerns of Americans of Polish descent at both the state and federal levels of government in the United States.**

**Section 2. This act shall take effect upon its passage.**

It is worthwhile noting that this enactment into statute will yet be another Massachusetts General Laws milestone achievement orchestrated by Dr. Scibak and Dean Bajdek on behalf of Polish Americans in Massachusetts following upon in recent years:

- Passage in **May 2004** of the first-in-the-nation **Visa Waiver for Poland Joint Resolution** by the Massachusetts Legislature.
- Establishment in **April 2007** of the first-in-the-nation **Polish Legislative Caucus** in the Massachusetts Legislature.
- Passage in **April 2008** of the first-in-the-nation **Polish American Congress Day of Recognition Joint Resolution** by the Massachusetts Legislature.

**5. POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS MEMBERS STATE-WIDE ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS DAY AT THE STATE HOUSE ON March 30, 2009.**

This is what an aspect of the first “Polish American Congress Day of Recognition” looked like at the State House in Boston on April 30, 2008:



Members of the Polish Legislative Caucus and members of the Polish American Congress from both the Eastern and Western Divisions in Massachusetts, along with other concerned Americans of Polish descent in the state, are pictured celebrating the related Joint Resolution which is held by Dean Anthony Bajdek. On his immediate right is Joseph Kos, President of the Western Massachusetts Division of the Polish American Congress. Representative John Scibak stands at the far right of the second row.

**PLEASE NOTE** that this year’s **POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS DAY** at the State House in Boston will occur on March 30, 2009, from noon to 2:00 p.m., beginning with Governor Deval Patrick reading the proclamation in Nurses Hall, followed by a light luncheon with members of the Polish Legislative Caucus during which time Caucus members will make individual presentations and then respond to questions from PAC members.

**We encourage you to come.** However, please notify us either by phone at 508-429-1305 or by email at [A.J.Bajdek@verizon.net](mailto:A.J.Bajdek@verizon.net) that you intend to participate so that nametags and sufficient food can be ordered. The luncheon will be free of charge to members, \$10 for others.

**Please join us at the State House for this special day when our state honors the PAC!**

**6. OTHER POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS DIVISIONS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES ARE URGED TO INTIATE THEIR OWN ANNUAL POLISH AMERICAN**

## **CONGRESS DAYS AT THE STATE HOUSE, OR AS THE CASE MAY BE, IN THE STATE CAPITAL**

Shortly before Christmas, Anthony Bajdek completed reaching agreements with the leadership of Polish American Congress Divisions in New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Arizona for launching Polish American Congress Days on the Massachusetts model beginning this spring. In Pennsylvania, Michael Blichasz, President of the Eastern Division in Philadelphia and Joseph Kaminski, President of the Western Division in Pittsburgh, agreed to collaborate in the venture. In New York, Theresa Bunk, President of the Central New York Division, Frank Milewski, President of the Downstate New York Division, and Richard Solecki, President of the Western New York Division agreed to undertake a similar venture in their state. In Illinois, Frank J. Spula, National President of the Polish American Congress and Camille Kopielski, President of the Illinois Division, will lead a Polish American Congress delegation to the state capital in Springfield in March 2009. In Arizona, Polish American Congress Division President Bogumil (Nick) Horchem will lead a Polish American Congress delegation to the state capital in Phoenix.

The purpose of these ventures is to make state legislators aware of the Polish American Congress and its mission. Conveniently as well, the Polish American Congress delegations will be able to express gratitude to their state legislators for successful passage of Visa Waiver for Poland Resolutions, given that Pennsylvania did so in April 2005, New York in June 2005, Arizona in April 2007, and Illinois in October 2007.

### **7. POLISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH TO BE OBSERVED BY PAC/E. MASS. IN AN OCTOBER 2009 VENUE**

As such, the Polish American Congress of Eastern Massachusetts will not hold a 2009 version of its **Annual Kościuszko's Birthday – Washington's Birthday Political Forum and Banquet** traditionally held in February. Further information about the October venue will be announced in the June issue of our *BULLETIN*. Other announcements will be included on our website as well, especially those relating to the **KOŚCIUSZKO DAY** and **POLISH CONSTITUTION DAY** observances on February 8 ( 2:00 p.m. at the Kościuszko Monument in the Public Garden, Boston) and May 4 (1:30 p.m. at the State House in Boston, room yet to be designated) respectively.

### **8. IT IS TIME ONCE AGAIN TO RENEW DUES FOR THE 2009 CALENDAR YEAR**

Our Division of the Polish American Congress operates on a Spartan annual budget. In this regard, members are assured that their payments will be used judiciously in fulfillment of the Division's financial obligation to the national office in Chicago and as it relates to the fulfillment of its mission in Massachusetts as well.

The Board of Directors of the Polish American Congress of Eastern Massachusetts extends its continuing gratitude for the loyal and generous support of our members.

Please use the pre-addressed envelope included with this *BULLETIN* to mail your payment. Annual individual dues still remain at \$35 and corporate dues at \$60.

**9. CHANGE OF MAILING ADDRESS FOR PAC/E. MASS.**

Since the fall of 1999, the mailing address of the Polish American Congress of Eastern Massachusetts existed in a privately paid mail service made available for faculty and staff for matters unrelated to the official business of Northeastern University in Boston. When Dean Bajdek retired from the administration on July 1, 2004 after thirty-nine years of employment in the University, that mail service – for which PAC/E. Mass. paid an annual fee – continued through the summer of 2008 when the University announced to all users that it decided to discontinue it.

As such, the new mailing address of the Polish American Congress of Eastern Massachusetts is 950 Highland Street, Holliston, MA 01746-1673. The telephone number is (508) 429-1305.

Reflecting cost containment, however, necessitates using the supply of old letterhead paper (that includes the now-obsolete Northeastern University mailing address) until the supply runs out.

**10. PAC/E. MASS. *BULLETIN* NOW AVAILABLE VIA EMAIL**

As another example of cost containment, the *BULLETIN* will be sent to members via email if they so desire. To receive future issues, please complete the form below and mail it in the enclosed envelope, along with your renewal of dues for 2009, in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope:

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Yes, I wish to receive future issues of the *BULLETIN* by email.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

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