



Polish American Congress, Inc.

Press Release

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Polish American Congress President Frank Spula Visits Poland, Participates in Congressional Delegation Events

Chicago, Illinois – January 24, 2012. President of the Polish American Congress, Frank J. Spula, paid a week-long visit to Poland January 8 to 13, in conjunction with the Congressional visit of Senator Mark Kirk and Representative Mike Quigley to that country. In addition to participating in key meetings and events of the Congressional Delegation, Mr. Spula held a series of meetings relating to the Polish American Congress and the Polish National Alliance.

At the top of the agenda for Senator Kirk, Congressman Quigley, and Mr. Spula was advancing admission of Poland to the Visa Waiver Program. They were assured by their interlocutors that the Polish Government has a strong interest in seeing visa relations with the United States improved and appreciates the efforts being made by Members of U.S. Congress, the Administration, and organizations such as the Polish American Congress.

Other issues discussed by Mr. Spula included planning for the visits to Chicago by President Komorowski and other senior Polish officials during the May 2012 NATO summit, organization of a conference to promote commercial cooperation between Polish-American and Polish firms, and plans for the Conference of Polonia from Abroad scheduled to meet in Warsaw in 2012..

Leadership Meetings

PAC President Spula participated in the Congressional Delegation's meetings with President of Poland Komorowski, former President Walesa, and Chairmen of the Senate and Sejm Foreign Relations Committees, and in laying wreaths at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

President of Poland Bronislaw Komorowski warmly welcomed Frank Spula to the delegation's lead-off meeting in the Presidential Palace on January 10. The American guests briefed President Komorowski on their efforts to secure visa waiver eligibility for Polish citizens and the progress that has been made to date. Their discussion also covered the current economic situation of both countries, participation by NATO countries in the war in Afghanistan, and the state of both countries' national security.

Senator Kirk, Congressman Quigley, and Mr. Spula also met with former President Lech Walesa, who responded in great form to questions posed by the Members of Congress. In his inimitable style, Walesa shared his insights about global economic and political problems and suggested intriguing possibilities and solutions.

Mr. Spula also participated in the Congressional Delegation's meeting with the Chairman of the Polish Sejm and Senate Foreign Relations Committees, Senator Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz and Deputy Grzegorz Schetyna, during which they exchanged information about visa issues, the May NATO meeting in Chicago, NATO forces in Afghanistan, Polish-Russian and US-Russian contacts, and world politics more generally.

During an early morning breakfast organized by the American Chamber of Commerce in Poland, Senator Kirk, Rep. Quigley, and Mr. Spula met with representatives of American firms in Poland and discussed conditions for expanding U.S.-Polish business. A dinner hosted by Senator Kirk and a dinner given in honor of the Congressional Delegation by U.S. Ambassador Lee Feinstein at the Ambassador's residence afforded President Spula further opportunities to informally discuss issues of interest to the Polish American Congress with Polish and American leaders.

Separately Mr. Spula met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski, with whom he discussed the visa issue, the May NATO meeting, and President Komorowski's visit to Chicago.

Expanding U.S.-Polish Social and Business Ties

During his visit to Poland, Mr. Spula also met with a number of other Polish officials and institutions to discuss issues of interest to the Polish American Congress, and also the Polish National Alliance.

Mr. Spula's first meeting was with Polish Senate President Bogdan Borusewicz, who informed him about plans for bringing Polonia leaders from around the world to Poland in 2012 for another World Polonia Congress. They also discussed possibilities for advancing bilateral investment. Mr. Spula renewed his invitation to Senator Borusewicz to visit Chicago.

Spula next visited the National Chamber of the Economy and met with its President, Andrzej Arendarski. They were joined by Dr. Paweł Pietrasieński, Poland's Minister for Trade and Investment Promotion at the Polish Embassy in Washington, and Mr. Maciej Cybulski, Director of the Illinois State Office for Central Europe in Warsaw. The purpose of their meeting was to agree on arrangements for a conference of Polonia businesspeople and professionals to be held in Chicago in 2012. President Arendarski offered his cooperation and the possibility of creating within the Chamber a "bureau for Polonia business" to gather data and assist communication between Polish and Polish-American businesses. During the meeting, Spula witnessed the signing of a letter of intent between the Chamber and the firm Angel Mobile concerning creation of a Polish-American Institute of New Initiatives to encourage young Polish entrepreneurs and spur innovative start-ups.

Spula's next stop was the Presidential Palace, where he met with Minister of State Roman Dziekoński to discuss the President's May visit to Chicago, the planned Polonia business conference, cooperation with American federal and state entities, and student exchanges and internships.

Before joining the Congressional Delegation on the second day of his visit to Poland, PAC President Spula called on Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy, Waldemar Pawlak. They discussed the U.S. and Polish economic situations, the upcoming Polonia business conference for which the Ministry is a co-sponsor, and ways of encouraging Polish-American professionals to more actively participate in the Polish market.

After departure of the Congressional Delegation for Krakow, President Spula spent some time on his final full day in Warsaw giving interviews to the Polish press, including Polish Radio and the Polish Press Agency. He also met with Wspólnota Polska President, Longin Komołowski, with whom he discussed the planned 2012 World Polonia Congress and how to implement the multi-faceted cooperation between the PAC and Wspólnota Polska proposed during Mr. Komołowski's meeting with the Council of National Directors in October 2011.

Mr. Spula, who is also President of the Polish National Alliance, a fraternal insurance organization, and of the PNA Bank, concluded his visit to Poland with a series of business meetings to explore possibilities for cooperation between the PNA and Poland's insurance and banking industry. Among others, Spula met with the Vice President of the Financial Oversight Commission, Prof. Lesław Gajek; Director of the Financial Markets Development Department of the Ministry of Finance, Katarzyna Przewalska; President of the National Council of Cooperatives, Alfred Domagalski; and Vice President of SGB Bank SA, Danuta Kowalczyk.