



POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS

OVER 65 YEARS OF SERVING THE INTERESTS OF POLISH AMERICANS

March 21, 2012

U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Schumer:

It is often said that "travel broadens the mind and raises the spirit," but as well that "the most difficult step of any journey is the first." However, in addition to broadening the mind and raising the spirit of travelers, the benefit for places being traveled to holds the promise of considerable economic opportunity. That being said, anything that hampers travel to the United States from abroad among people of good will from nations that are proven, loyal allies and friends of the United States is detrimental ultimately to the economic well-being of Americans.

As you know, the Visa Waiver Program was established exactly for that purpose – "to eliminate unnecessary barriers to travel, stimulating the tourism industry, and permitting the Department of State to focus consular resources in other areas," as stated by the Department of State. As a result, every year millions of tourists travel to our beautiful country and in the process leave substantial revenue behind them.

Poland, one of America's most loyal and proven allies in Central and Eastern Europe continues to be excluded from the privilege of visa-free travel.

Official estimates today indicate that the size of our nation's Polish American community exceeds ten million individuals, the vast majority of whom continue to maintain close ties with their families, friends, and professional counterparts in Poland.

Furthermore, Poland today, an active member of European Union, is a country with a vibrant and stable economy – quite a unique phenomenon in these turbulent times. Every year marks in Poland increase in travel to destinations worldwide, frequently on visa-free basis. At the same time, in order to visit the United States, Poles have to undergo an expensive and cumbersome visa process with no assurance of success. For pragmatic Poles, sadly, it resulted in the development of a philosophy, which can be summarized as: "It is too complicated to go to the United States - I will go somewhere else."

In this day and age of expanding globalism, we cannot afford to discourage tourism to our great nation. If among the nations whose citizens we wish to attract in greater numbers, many people are forced to jump through discouraging and arbitrary hoops as their first step, they will turn their attention elsewhere, as they already are in case of Poland, taking their money with them.

Sincerely,



Frank J. Spula,
President

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