



The United States Conference of Mayors

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STATEMENT FROM THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS CEO AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TOM COCHRAN ON THE NATIONAL MOURNING OF POLAND AND THE LOSS OF PRESIDENT LECH KACZYNSKI, FIRST LADY MARIA KACZYNSKI, AND NATIONAL LEADERS OF POLAND

Washington, D.C. -- On behalf of the nation's mayors and The United States Conference of Mayors, CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran offers heartfelt condolences to the Polish people and its leaders upon the tragic loss of President Lech Kaczynski.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors has a long friendship with the Polish people and with Polish local, regional, and national leaders. The more than ten million Americans of Polish ancestry living in the United States have contributed greatly to American cities and to our nation.

As an organization, the Conference of Mayors has had a cherished friendship with Poland over many years and especially since 1989. Conference CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran was invited to Poland as an election observer in June 1989, and gladly contributed to oversight of that important election, the first democratic election in Poland since the 1930's.

In October 1990, with U.S. government support, the Conference of Mayors organized a delegation of mayors to conduct Mayors Leadership Institutes with newly-elected Polish mayors in Warsaw, Krakow, and Rzeszow. The Conference fielded three additional delegations to Poland -- in 2004, 2006, and in 2007. In 2007, the Conference held its historic first-ever -- outside the United States -- International Mayors Institute on City Design, bringing together U.S. and Polish mayors to share best practices on design and to learn from each other.

The Conference of Mayors is proud of the distinguished service of Former Conference President and Mayor of Knoxville, Tennessee, Ambassador Victor Ashe, who was sworn in as Ambassador to Poland in June 2004 and served until February 2009. During the Conference of Mayors' 2007 Mayoral Mission to Poland, Ambassador Ashe accompanied the delegation to the Presidential Palace to meet with President Lech Kaczynski.

During that meeting, the U.S. Conference of Mayors delegation had a productive exchange with the President. His strong intellect and convictions, strength of character, and fierce patriotism were, as always, evident. The U.S. mayors also shared observations with the President about his having been a mayor himself, enjoying the President's remarks about his tenure as mayor of Warsaw, elected in 2002 and serving until 2005.

Poland is a country that produces giants of science, literature, music, politics, economics, and all other areas-- Jozef Konrad Korzenlowski (Joseph Conrad), Ignacy Paderewski, Maria Sklodowska (Madame Curie), Fryderyk Chopin. Adam Mickiewicz, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Karol Wojtyła (Pope John Paul II), and countless others.

Lech Kaczynski, teacher, thinker, scholar, visionary, organizer, public servant, patriot, Mayor of Warsaw, and President of Poland, will be always respected remembered, and revered for his unflinching and dedicated service to his people, to his city, and to his country.

The United States Conference of Mayors joins with Poland and the world in mourning the tragic loss of the national military, political, and economic leaders of Poland, of Maria Kaczynski, the First Lady of Poland, and of President Lech Kaczynski.

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Released to American and International Press, Mayor Ryszard Grobelny, Mayor of Poznan, Poland and President, Polish Cities Association and Warsaw Mayor Hanna Growkiewicz-Waltz

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,139 such cities in the country today. Each city is represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the mayor. More information about the Conference is available at usmayors.org.