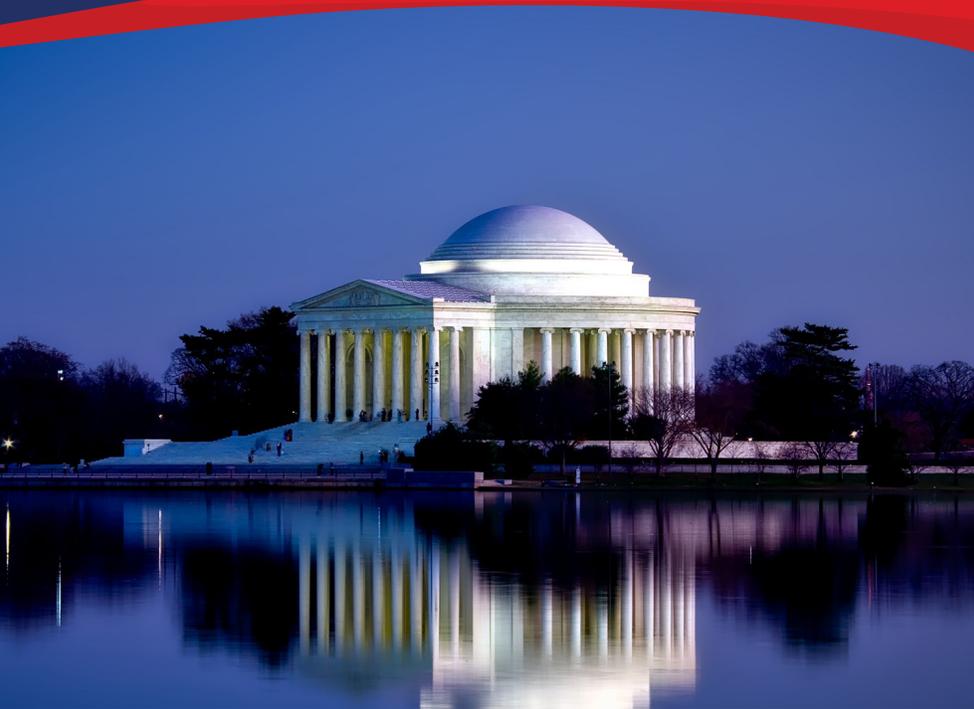




POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 6



Your Voice
in *America!*

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

Future PAC Newsletters will be sent out:

Deadline for submission	Publication date
Friday, February 3, 2017	Friday, February 10, 2017
Friday, April 7, 2017	Friday, April 14, 2017
Friday, June 2, 2017	Friday, June 9, 2017
Friday, August 4, 2017	Friday, August 11, 2017
Friday, October 6, 2017	Friday, October 13, 2017
Friday, December 1, 2017	Friday, December 8, 2017

In 2017, the Polish American Congress Council of National Directors Returns to Washington, D.C.

At the 2016 Council of National Directors meeting held in Chicago, those present voted to once again hold its next Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. Planning has begun to make this gathering equally successful as the one that took place in 2015. The specific dates and times are still being worked out as the hotel venue needs to be secured. As soon as this information is finalized, you will be notified.

Why Meet in Washington, D.C.?

In order to continue our organization's visibility on a national level, we decided at our September meeting in Chicago to return to our nation's Capitol in 2017. There, we will maximize our time with visits to Congressional offices, as well as meet to conduct our organization's business.

This will be another great opportunity for the PAC! In order for this meeting to be a success, we will need everyone present. Begin planning for the Washington, D.C. meeting, and as soon as specific information becomes available, please make your plans to attend!

"Your Voice in America" newsletter is published bimonthly by the Polish American Congress. The purpose of the newsletter is to offer PAC National Directors and PAC Executive Committee members the opportunity to share news and information about their state divisions and offices. The newsletter does not receive funds from any external source. The editor is Dr. Mark Pienkos.

Articles should be between 100 and 400 words. Some editing will be done to match our style guidelines and spatial constraints, as well as correcting grammatical errors. We do not send proofs for approval. When sending photos, please include captions with names, official titles. All submitted materials become the property of the Polish American Congress and may be used to promote the mission of the PAC. Materials will not be returned unless requested.

Articles are due according to this schedule. Send your submissions to PAC National VP for Public Relations, Mark Pienkos at markpienkos2012@gmail.com.

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President's Message

Dear National Directors of the Polish American Congress, members and friends of the Polish American Community,



Frank J. Spula, President

2016 was indeed an exciting year for the Polish American Congress! The last two months have been especially eventful. Mr. Donald Trump, now President-Elect, met with PAC officers and representatives of the local Polish community in Chicago. Shortly after that, we hosted a meeting with Madame Secretary Madeline Albright, the former Secretary of State, who represented the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign. During both meetings, we had the chance to discuss matters that are particularly relevant to our Polish American Community as well as issues for Poland, and got to know both presidential candidates views on those topics.

I hope the events and accomplishments of 2016 will set the groundwork for the strengthening of our Organization and making it more influential on the political scene in the United States, as well as Poland. In order to achieve success, we need to have one, united voice. With respect to our differences, and constructive dialog during our meetings, on the outside we need to be loyal to our Organization, its mission statement, officers and members. This is the only way of achieving our goals and projecting a positive image in society.

Since the formation of the Polish American Congress in 1944, the world has changed, and so have the goals of our Organization. Polish people make their political choices in a democratic process. We Polish Americans can be proud of all of these changes and support the country of our forefathers by a strong presence on the political scene and lobbying for Polish causes and interests.

In our country, we have approximately 10 million Americans of Polish backgrounds. Even though only a small percentage of them speaks Polish, the love and interest in Poland are there! We need to build on this and respect the generations that carried that Polish heritage with such great pride.

We also need to look at our children and get them involved in the Organization, in working for the betterment of the Polish Community in the United States. It is our role to support them, to help them achieve their goals, so they will be our pride and legacy.

For me personally, 2016 was a very busy year with trips to Poland: first in April for the official celebration of the 1050 years of Christianity, in May for celebrations of the Constitution Day, and a short yet memorable visit to Vilnius, Lithuania. Then in July, I traveled once again to Poland to explore the incredible potential of the Podkarpacie Region. All of the engagements in the general elections, as well as the election meeting of the Polish American Congress in Chicago were busy times for me and fellow members. Thanks to all that I had the privilege of cooperating on various projects during the past year. Also, thank you to all that contribute to the Polish American Congress with their time, efforts and money.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year! *Wesołych Świąt!*

Sincerely,
Frank J. Spula, President



Beautiful City of Gdańsk



Poland 2016 - Silent Unseen - Cichociemni

The year 2016 marks the 75th anniversary of the First Drop of the Cichociemni Paratroopers. Who were they? Called the “Silent Unseen,” they were a handpicked, elite paratrooper unit of the Polish Army in exile. Created in Great Britain, they were to operate in occupied Poland (Cichociemni Spadochroniarze Armii Krajowej).

Of the 2,613 Polish Army soldiers who volunteered for training by Polish and British SOE operatives, only 606 people completed the training, and eventually 316 of them were secretly parachuted into occupied Poland. The first operation (“air bridge,” as it was called) took place on February 15, 1941. After December 27, 1944, further operations were discontinued, as by then most of Poland had been occupied by the Red Army.

The origins of the name are obscure and may never be known with certainty. “Silent Unseen” probably related to how some soldiers seemingly disappeared from their line units overnight to volunteer for special operations service, and also describes those “who appear silently where they are least expected, play havoc with the enemy and disappear whence they came, unnoticed, unseen.”

The Cichociemni were trained in Scotland to be the leaders of the Polish underground domestic Army called AK. Some of them specialized in sabotage and guerrilla tactics, others were experts in communication and the rest supplemented intelligence. They were often referred to as the Polish SOE (Special Operations Executive). Training could not take place in Poland as it was occupied by Germany and the USSR.

After much training, with a brand new name, new profession, new personal history and a little capsule of poison in their pockets in the event of German capture, they were dropped over Poland, to become the leaders of AK – the Polish Army. Many of them played important roles in WWII and post-war Poland and Europe.

The wildness of the Highlands was not the only thing Cichociemni is remembered from Scotland. Many years after the war they would also often mention the Whisky, and... the Scottish girls. Obviously, they needed to learn good English, and this was the simplest way...

Polish soldiers were considered very attractive by the Scottish girls. They were taller than an average Scot, often from noble families, with stunning manners (flowers and hand-kissing; yes gents, it did work!) and with amazing dancing skills. (They all danced like Fred Astaire!) No wonder there are plenty of romantic stories from that period, and less wonder still that today the words ‘Polish Soldier’ will cause many an elderly woman to blush and smile.

Of 316 Cichociemni, 103 perished during the war: in combat with the Germans, executed by the Gestapo, or in air crashes. A further nine were executed after the war by the Polish People's Republic. Altogether 91 operatives took part in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Earlier in the year, the Polish Parliament declared 2016 a year of tribute to members of the Cichociemni. A monument to the Silent Unseen stands in Dębowiec.

Thank you for reading this amazing story!

**May you enjoy a peaceful and joyful Christmas season.
Wesołych, radosnych Świąt Bożego Narodzenia!**

Debbie Majka, Polish American Congress
Vice President for Cultural Affairs

POLISH INDEPENDENCE DAY AT THE POLISH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, D.C.



Newly appointed Polish Ambassador to the U.S., Piotr Wilczek, giving his remarks on the significance of Poland's Independence Day.



Peter Obst, Poles in America Foundation, joins Debbie Majka, PAC Vice President for Cultural Affairs and newly appointed Ambassador Piotr Wilczek at the Polish Embassy in Washington, D.C. Many were in attendance to celebrate the 98th anniversary of Polish Independence.



Celebrating Polish Independence Day at the Republic of Poland Embassy in Washington, D.C.



(L-R) Debbie Majka, PAC Vice President for Cultural Affairs, Congressman Tim Murphy and Peter Obst of Poles in America Foundation pose following the Independence Day ceremonies held at the Polish Embassy in Washington, D.C.



Courtesy of Irena Frączek

POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS-WISCONSIN DIVISION CELEBRATES POLISH INDEPENDENCE DAY AND VETERANS DAY

Irena Frączek reports

Following the tradition established in 1997, the Polish American Congress - Wisconsin Division proudly hosted its annual luncheon in observance of Polish Independence Day and Veterans Day. Over 250 guests attended this year's gathering held on November 6, 2016 in the beautiful Polish Center of Wisconsin located in Franklin, a suburb of Milwaukee.

Polish Independence Day (Narodowe Święto Niepodległości) was established in 1937 to celebrate the anniversary of the end of World War I - November 11, 1918. This proclamation restored the Polish sovereign state after 123 years of partition by Russia, Germany and Austria. This day of tribute to all those who fought for an independent Poland also coincides with Veterans Day honoring past and present members of the United States Armed Forces.

The ceremony began with the singing of the Polish and American national anthems led by Joseph Drobot, President of the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, and violinist John Pienkos, who also serves as an Alternate National Director for the PAC-Wisconsin Division. Among distinguished guests introduced following the anthems were Piotr Janicki, Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Chicago, Michael Lovell, President of Marquette University, Rev. Robert Wild, Past President and current Chancellor of Marquette University, Teresa Jankowski, Commissioner of the Polish National Alliance, Ken Skowronski, President of the Polish Heritage Alliance, and artist and sculptor Boleslaw Kochanowski, as well as many past and present officers of the PAC-Wisconsin Division.



Courtesy of Irena Frączek

(L-R) Dr. Mark Pienkos, Polish American Congress National Vice President for Public Relations, Piotr Janicki, Consul General of the Republic of Poland in Chicago, and David Rydzewski, President of the PAC-Wisconsin Division, pose for a photo prior to the Polish Independence Day/Veterans Day festivities.

After opening remarks delivered by David Rydzewski, President of PAC-Wisconsin Division, and Consul General Piotr Janicki, the elegant meal followed the invocation given by Fr. Ronald Kotecki. Aleksandra Burzynski, owner of Polonez Restaurant in Milwaukee, generously donated the delectable dessert served at the luncheon.

The event culminated in the salute to veterans, plus the traditional ceremony of awarding the Congressman Clement Zablocki Civic Achievement Award to outstanding individuals and organizations for their service to the Polish American community, as well as Polish contributions to the state and the nation. Over the years, the award has been granted to over seventy deserving recipients with many of them attending the 2016 ceremony.

PAC - WISCONSIN DIVISION CONGRATULATES TO THE 2016 HONOREES:

David Rydzewski, President of the PAC-Wisconsin Division shown presenting awards to the honorees.

1. Dr. Stanley Jaskolski – an accomplished scholar and most successful fundraiser, former Dean of the Marquette University College of Engineering and former member of the Board of the National Science Foundation. He has been also a generous supporter of the Polish Heritage Alliance and the Polish Center of Wisconsin.

2. Major Leonard Jedrzejczak – a Major in the Polish Army under the command of General Wladyslaw Anders and participant of heroic battles of Monte Cassino, Bologna and Tobruk. In the United States, he was actively involved in the Polonia Sport Club, Polish Scouts, the weekly Polish radio program and the Wisconsin PAC.

3. Rev. Tim Kitzke – the Pastor of Three Holy Women Parish on Milwaukee’s East Side, one of the city’s leading parishes including three churches established by Polish immigrants. He also serves as Vicar General for Urban Ministries for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and is a board member of the Catholic Home of Milwaukee.

4. Ken Skowronski – Wisconsin State Representative and President of the Polish Heritage Alliance of Wisconsin, an organization that sponsors the annual Polish Fest in downtown Milwaukee and the Polish Center of Wisconsin. Formerly served as Alderman for the City of Franklin, President of the Franklin Lions Club and Deputy Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus.

6. Sisters of St Joseph of the Third Order of St Francis – originally known as the Polish Sisters of St. Joseph, the Order was founded in 1901 in Stevens Point, Wisconsin to teach children of Polish immigrants. Celebrating the 115th anniversary, the Order is engaged now in the broader fields of health and respite care.

7. John Paul II Polish Saturday School - at Milwaukee’s St Maximilian Kolbe Parish for continuing the long standing tradition of serving Polish Americans in the Milwaukee area. The school offers its students instruction in Polish language and an excellent program of classes in Polish culture, traditions and geography of Poland.



PAC - Michigan Division Honors Polish Language Teachers

The Polish American Congress - Michigan Division's mission is not only to lead and represent the Polish American community of the state of Michigan, but also to recognize Polish American organizations and individuals that work tirelessly to further Polish causes and cultivate the Polish heritage in the next generations of Polish Americans. There are groups, especially those who work with our youth, who are the glue that strengthens connectivity to our heritage and community, now and into the future. We at PAC-MI Division are especially mindful of their presence and ongoing contributions.

No one fits better into this category than Polish teachers that work at local Polish Language Schools in our state. To honor their involvement and devotion to educate our Polish American children and youth, the Polish American Congress - Michigan Division invited teachers of all the local Polish Language Schools for a special meeting and dinner, Saturday, October 19, at PAC-MI Division headquarters in Hamtramck, MI.

Ann Bankowski, President of the Polish American Congress - Michigan Division (for many years a Polish language teacher herself), congratulated everyone present for their dedication and sacrifice, and wished them continued success in molding the next generations of Polish American leaders. During the meeting, a special address to all Polish language teachers abroad, written by the President of Poland, Andrzej Duda, was read.

“The work of a Polish teacher abroad is a particular mission and a special challenge. In addition to profound knowledge and comprehensive skills, it requires full involvement in shaping the character and spirit of the new generations, often born and raised outside of Poland,” the address reads. “For this patriotic attitude and service to Poland, you deserve our highest appreciation and gratitude.”

Each of the teachers present at the Saturday meeting received a special Certificate of Appreciation and a beautiful rose. After the official part of the meeting, everyone was invited to a delicious dinner.

There are five active Polish Language Schools in the Metro Detroit area: Adam Mickiewicz Polish Language Schools in Sterling Heights (on the grounds of the Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish), Fr. Jozef Dabrowski Polish Language School (on the campus of the Orchard Lake Schools), St. John Paul II Polish Language and Culture School in Hamtramck (at St. Florian Parish), General Casimir Pulaski Polish Language School (sponsored by PNA) in Dearborn Heights (at St. Mel Parish), and the Polish Language Center of Ann Arbor (on the campus of Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti).

Article submitted by Sebastian Szczepanski, PAC-MI Division member and PAC office administrative assistant, along with Ann Bankowski, President of PAC-MI Division.



Teachers of Polish language schools in Michigan with Polish American Congress Michigan Division President Ann Bankowski (Far Right).



WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN DIVISION HOLDS ANNUAL THANKSGIVING DINNER

On Saturday, November 13th the Washington Metropolitan Division held its annual Thanksgiving Dinner at the Kenwood Country Club in Bethesda, Maryland. This year's program included a thought-provoking keynote address by Damon Wilson, Executive Vice President at the Atlantic Council. Mr. Wilson spoke about the important role the United States and Poland play in Europe. He also addressed the future of NATO in light of recent security concerns in Europe. A unique part of this year's program was bestowing an award to an organization rather than an individual. This year's awardee was the National Katyn Memorial Foundation and the award was accepted by Richard Poremski, the Foundation's Chairman. The award was presented for the work the Foundation has done in promoting and preserving the memory of the 1940 Katyn Massacre and the education of future generations. Mr. Poremski shared with the gathered guests the work the organization has done and how the National Katyn Memorial came to Baltimore. Attendees were also treated to a delightful concert of Polish songs sung by the very talented Dr. Laura Kafka-Price who was accompanied by Ms. Eileen Cornett on piano. The evening concluded with another successful turkey raffle for gift cards or gift baskets. It was a happy occasion to meet with old friends, make new ones and enjoy each other's company during a great program.



Dr. Susanne Lotarski (Center), President of the Washington Metropolitan Division and Ted Mirecki (Right), First Vice President bestow the award to Richard Poremski on behalf of the National Katyn Memorial Foundation.



Damon Wilson, Executive Vice President of the Atlantic Council, delivering his Keynote Address.



Merry Christmas and
a Happy, Healthy and
Prosperous New Year!
Wesołych Świąt!

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POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS

Founded in May, 1944, the Polish American Congress is a National Umbrella Organization, representing at least 10 million Americans of Polish descent and origin. Its membership is comprised of fraternal, educational, veteran, religious, cultural, social, business, political organizations and individual membership. The Polish American community prides itself on its deeply rooted commitment to the values of family, faith, democracy, hard work and fulfillment of the American dream. We are present in every state and virtually every community in America, on various social, business and economic levels.

The Polish American Congress, an “umbrella” organization, is a federation of over 3000 Polish American organizations and clubs, ranging from national fraternal benefit societies, such as the Polish National Alliance, Polish Women’s Alliance, Polish Roman Catholic Union, Polish Falcons and others, including veteran, cultural, professional, religious and social associations, with aggregate membership of over one million. The PAC by-laws also provide for individual membership, as well as associate membership.

The PAC promotes civic, educational and cultural programs designed to further not only the knowledge of Polish history, language and culture, but to stimulate Polish American involvement and accomplishments.

The governing body of the PAC is the Council of National Directors, consisting of directors elected by their respective State Divisions or National Organizations and up to 10 at-large directors elected by the Council. Day-to-day operations are conducted by the Executive Committee elected by the Council of National Directors for a two year term.

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