

Nancy Johnson



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Johnson Bill Brings Fairness for Polish Visitors

Congresswoman to Meet with President Kwasniewski Tomorrow

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Nancy Johnson today reintroduced bipartisan legislation that makes travel to the United States fairer for Polish visitors.

Johnson’s legislation would allow Polish citizens to travel to the United States with a valid passport, rescinding the requirement that Polish visitors also obtain a travel visa.

Johnson will also meet with Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski on Wednesday in Washington, where he is expected to express strong support for the legislation. President Kwasniewski joins former Polish President Lech Walesa in support of Johnson’s bill.

“As a matter of fairness, Polish citizens should be able to travel to the United States under the same rules as citizens of most other European countries,” Johnson said. “Generations of Polish-Americans have helped build this country. Their friends and family should be able to visit the United States with just a passport like French and German citizens can.”

“I’m pleased President Kwasniewski is supporting my legislation and I look forward to working with him to achieve fairness for Polish-Americans and Polish citizens,” Johnson added.

Under the Visa Waiver Program, the U.S. government allows citizens of 27 countries to visit the United States for up to 90 days without having to obtain a travel visa. While Poland is not a member of the program, countries that are include Slovenia, Brunei, France, Germany, Australia, Singapore, and Japan.

By adding Poland to the Visa Waiver Program, Johnson’s legislation will allow Polish citizens to travel to the United States with only a passport. Poland unilaterally repealed its visa requirement for American visitors in 1991.

Johnson reintroduced her legislation today with bipartisan support. U.S. Reps. Daniel Lipinski (D-IL), John Shimkus (R-IL), Anthony Weiner (D-NY), and Joseph Crowley (D-NY) are all original cosponsors. Johnson first introduced this legislation last year.

Nine million Americans of Polish ancestry live in the United States. Approximately 300,000 people of Polish ancestry live in Connecticut, including 17,000 Polish speakers. Johnson's hometown of New Britain, Connecticut is home to a thriving Polish-American community.

"This means a great deal for the Polish community," said Andre Blaszczynski, President of the Polish American Foundation of Connecticut, a non-profit organization that provides cultural and social services. "This is at the very top of the agenda for Polish Americans and signifies Poland's final rejoining of the West. Congresswoman Johnson has been a steadfast friend of the Polish-American community in New Britain and Connecticut and we're extremely grateful for her leadership."

Johnson stated that America's travel policies should reflect the strong steps Poland has taken toward freedom and openness in the last 15 years. Poland joined the NATO alliance in 1999 and the European Union last year. Poland has been a staunch ally of the United States in the War on Terror and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

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