

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Wexler Urges Bush to Discuss Holocaust Property Restitution Issue with Polish President Kaczynski

(Washington, DC) Today, Congressman Robert Wexler (D-FL), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe in the House Committee on Foreign Affairs was joined by fifteen of his Congressional colleagues in sending a letter to President Bush voicing concerns over unresolved Holocaust property restitution issues in Poland. The letter urges President Bush to raise the issue of property restitution and/or compensation for thousands of American and international Holocaust survivors during his June 8th meeting with President Lech Kaczynski of Poland.

"I am hopeful that President Bush will convey the importance of this issue to President Kaczynski and his government," Congressman Wexler said. "It is critical that one of America's most important allies, Poland, pass legislation that will fairly address outstanding property claims and help put to rest one of the darkest chapters in history."

Congressman Wexler's letter also recognizes the importance of the US-Polish relationship and praises Poland's sponsorship of the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and for agreeing to build a museum recognizing 800 years of Polish Jewry that will be located in Warsaw's former Jewish quarter.

Members of the United States Congress who have joined Congressman Robert Wexler on this letter to President Bush include Rep. Tom Lantos, Rep. Joseph Crowley, Rep. Shelley Berkley, Rep. Henry Waxman, Rep. Gary Ackerman, Rep. Howard Berman, Rep. Steve Cohen, Rep. Elton Gallegly, Rep. Barney Frank, Rep. Jerald Nadler, Rep. Eliot Engel, Rep. Debbie Wasserman Shultz, Rep. Ron Klein, Rep. Sander Levin, and Rep. Janice Schakowsky. A copy of the letter is attached.

Congressman Wexler is Chairman of the Europe Subcommittee and a senior member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the House Judiciary Committee; and he also sits on the Financial Services Committee.

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June 7, 2007

Dear President Bush:

As Members of Congress representing both tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors from Poland who currently reside in the United States and whose property was expropriated during the Holocaust, and thousands of former Polish citizens who currently reside in the United States whose property was nationalized by the Communist government, we urge you to raise the issue of the compensation or restitution of confiscated property when you meet with the President Kaczyński of Poland this Friday.

We urge you to emphasize to President Kaczyński the importance of his government enacting fair and comprehensive legislation for the return and/or compensation of confiscated property in Poland. It is also critical that the President ensure that the legislation now being proposed in the Polish parliament contains procedures that enable individuals residing outside of Poland to make claims in a non-bureaucratic simple manner -- especially since many of the claimants

will be elderly and frail. Unfortunately, the proposed legislation is seriously deficient in this regard, and your support in addressing this issue will be of great significance to thousands of Americans. Finally, we also have concern that the proposed legislation may be read as to exclude most Americans from making a claim -- due to the existence of the 1960 agreement between the US and Poland. To this end we look forward to your obtaining assurances from the President and his government that this agreement will not restrict Americans from making a property restitution claim.

President Bush, as strong supporters of US-Polish relations, we believe that our ally Poland must ensure that there is a fair and open process in order to address outstanding property restitution claims. Poland has made historic strides since the end of the Cold War overcoming the darkest periods of its history -- during Nazi occupation of Poland and under Communist rule -- and we hope that President Kaczyński will continue on this path and provide a measure of justice for those individuals whose property was unlawfully confiscated.

We look forward to your response to our letter.

Sincerely,

Rep. Robert Wexler
Rep. Tom Lantos
Rep. Joseph Crowley
Rep. Shelley Berkley
Rep. Henry Waxman
Rep. Gary Ackerman
Rep. Howard Berman
Rep. Steve Cohen
Rep. Elton Gallegly
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