

American Hungarian Federation's Public Statements Regarding Visa Waiver

I.

Remarks of Frank Koszorus Jr. at the Hudson Institute's Panel Discussion, "The Enduring Strains of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe"

Excerpt

Washington, D.C.

June 14, 2007

I would like to share some thoughts with you from my perspective as an advocate and a student of Central and Eastern Europe and to touch on some issues for discussion this morning.

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An inexplicable policy that is causing inestimable damage to the United States with its new Central and Eastern European NATO allies is the region's exclusion from the visa waiver program. As Helle Dale wrote in the spring issue of *European Affairs*: "Meanwhile the problem is fueling anti-U.S. antagonisms and a perception of capricious discrimination by U.S. bureaucrats ---and damping the visits to the U.S. of people from countries with whom Washington would like to improve commercial and intellectual ties. Meanwhile horror stories abound from friends and diplomats from Central and Eastern Europe about the problems besetting foreigners seeking to visit the United States. In fact bringing up the subject of visas with any resident of those countries is like waving a red

flag before a bull.” Visa waiver must be satisfactorily addressed and resolved at long last.

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II.

ACTION ALERT – IMMEDIATE ACTION NEEDED

The U.S. Congress is considering legislation that would provide Hungarians and other American allies visa free travel to the United States. Although bills had been considered in the previous Congress, they were not adopted.

The 110th Congress is addressing the issue once again. On February 15, the Senate adopted as a part of a security bill - S. 4 ("Improving America's Security by Implementing Unfinished Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007") sponsored by Sen. Harry Reid D-NV). A Section of that bill, the Secure Travel and Counterterrorism Partnership Act, would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to enable more countries, including Hungary, to qualify for participation in the Visa Waiver Program.

Passage of the bill extending visa-free **travel** privileges to nationals of countries, such as Hungary, that are allies in the war on terrorism will ease travel restrictions, enhance U.S. security, support and expand tourism **and** business opportunities and strengthen bilateral relationships.

WE URGE YOU, BOTH AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS COMMUNITY LEADERS, TO CONTACT BOTH OF YOUR SENATORS TO SUPPORT THE VISA WAIVER PROVISIONS OF S.4.

THE MESSAGE TO YOUR SENATORS IS: "As your constituent I urge you to support the passage of Visa Waiver provisions of the S.4 legislation by voting IN FAVOR of inclusion of the Visa Waiver Program provisions in the text of S.4"

CONTACT INFORMATION TO YOUR SENATORS
Senate Web site - <http://www.senate.gov/>
Call the US Congress Switchboard - (202) 224-3121
Check the Blue pages in the telephone directory

Please send us copies of the letters you have submitted to your Senators or let us know if you have called them.

American Hungarian Federation
International Relations Committee

III.

Washington Times

3/28/2008 - Letter to the Editor:

America and its Eastern European allies

Helle Dale rightly asserts that waiving visa requirements for our allies in Central and Eastern Europe is indispensable ("Building strategic relationships," Op-Ed, Wednesday). The visa-waiver program is a building block in the security structure of the region.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the restoration of sovereignty to the nations of Eastern Europe validated Western values. It soon became apparent, however, that Russia had not reconciled its loss of empire and would seek to influence the region, although less directly than by dispatching tanks as it had done during the Cold War.

Quickly reintegrating Central and Eastern Europe into Western institutions, and thereby strengthening democracy, was the best means to advance both the geostrategic interests of the United States and the aspirations of the nations of the region. The prescience of the United States in enlarging NATO to include the former Soviet satellites and the Baltic countries became apparent as Russia began to aggressively assert itself.

In order to prevent any backsliding, the United States must continue to exercise leadership by remaining fully engaged in the region. Relatively simple steps taken to further this engagement will pay handsome dividends. These include reaching out not only to governments and the former ruling nomenklatura, but also to the people of the region, especially those who at great sacrifice helped topple the Communist regimes.

Extending the visa-waiver program to the citizens of our new allies, including Hungarians, is a critical way of shoring up their friendship toward the United States and reversing a growing cynicism caused by a feeling that America is ignoring them after the initial euphoria following the fall of the Berlin Wall. The United States needs genuine and staunch friends. Visa-waiver extends the hand of friendship to our new allies.

Frank Koszorus, Jr.
Co-president
American Hungarian Federation

IV.



Frank koszorús szemével

Mit jelent az amerikai vízummentesség Magyarországnak?

2008. március 28. 16:15

Az amerikai vízummentességi programnak a kelet-európai szövetségesekre történő kiterjesztésével megerősíthető a térségben az Amerika iránti barátság - állapította meg Frank Koszorús, az Amerikai Magyar Szövetség (AHF) társelnöke a pénteki The Washington Timesban közölt olvasói levelében.

A vízummentesség megadása az új kelet-európai szövetségesek, köztük Magyarország állampolgárainak alapvető eszköz annak a cinizmusnak a csökkentésére is, amelyet az az érzés váltott ki, hogy Amerika a berlini fal leomlását követő eupória után megfeledkezett a térségről - írta az egyik legnagyobb tengerentúli magyar ernyőszervezet vezetője.

V.

American Hungarian Federation Raises Visa Waiver at America Abroad Media Town Hall Meeting: "Foreign Policy and the Presidential Election: America's Image Problem"

(Washington, D.C.) The American Hungarian Federation ("Federation") attended a special town hall discussion, presented by WAMU 88.5, America Abroad Media, and *The American Interest* magazine, and senior foreign policy advisors from the presidential campaigns of Senators Hillary Clinton, John McCain, and Barack Obama. The participants discussed strategies for improving America's standing abroad.

The 90-minute town hall discussion was moderated by Kojo Nnamdi of WAMU 88.5 and Marvin Kalb of America Abroad Media and was held at American University.

Foreign policy advisors from each of the presidential campaigns participated in the discussion: Richard Danzig, Senior Foreign Policy Advisor to Senator Barack Obama's presidential campaign; Lee Feinstein, National Security Director for Senator Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign; and John Lehman, Foreign and Defense Policy Advisor to Senator John McCain's presidential campaign.

The live event took place on Monday, April 7 and was subsequently broadcast on Thursday, April 9.

Frank Koszorus, Jr., Chairman of the Federation's International Relations Committee, represented the organization and asked the foreign policy advisors about the visa waiver program. He prefaced his question by stating that failure to extend visa free travel to citizens of our new allies and friends in Central Europe has needlessly given us a black eye at a time the United States needs staunch friends.

Lehman and Feinstein responded. According to Lehman, Senator McCain supports granting of visas for education, but views visa waiver separately. While supporting visa waiver, Lehman placed considerable emphasis on the need for strong security measures. He cautioned that if the new allies do not have the same security safeguards as the U.S. does, visa free travel could provide an open window for terrorists.

Feinstein disagreed, noting that with proper precautions visa waiver is not an open window. He stressed that it is essential as well as an obligation to grant our new allies visa free travel. That policy should be a top priority.

"It's important to stay engaged on this significant issue and not just react to developments," noted Koszorus after the event. "The Federation has raised visa waiver in various fora and will continue to participate in the debate surrounding this issue," he added.

The program, including the question and answers relating to visa waiver, can be heard on www.Americaabroadmedia.org/election_townhall.htm End.