

POLISH AMERICAN CONGRESS

ILLINOIS DIVISION



October 4, 2009

Greetings to you all,

On behalf of the Polish American Congress of the Illinois Division, let me welcome each one of you to the 40th Anniversary of the Polish Heritage Month Banquet. Annually, in the month of October, Polish Communities across the United States of America along with our American Friends have every reason to be jubilant and to celebrate our rich cultural heritage.

Today, we recognize unquestionably that we have achieved many a success in our turbulent history and we can say unequivocally "mission accomplished" to the charter established by the Polish American Congress in 1944 in Buffalo, New York. Above all, after nearly fifty years of fighting communist oppression, Poland today, is again a free and independent Nation. Without any doubt, we come to realize that the most important challenge for the Polish American Congress and the Polonia at large, is an urgent need to define, a new mission for Polish Americans of this and future generations to improve the political, economic and social status of Polonia in the United States of America.

There are many initiatives, reforms and programs required for this new mission to succeed but let me address and bring to your attention only one critical priority, which I believe forms the key element to revitalizing our organization. Once again, we have to return, to being the formidable, powerful and influential ethnic group that we once were. We must above all strive earnestly to expand the Congress manifold and seriously engage Polish Youth in our organizational ranks. Under the umbrella of the Polish American Congress, we must bring Youth from all sectors of our society: Polish Saturday Schools, Public Schools, and also Colleges and Universities. We must empower them with knowledge and resources to become elite members and leaders of our American political establishment.

Lastly, let's face the reality, the Congress by itself cannot take responsibility for tasks of such enormous magnitude. We must therefore, commit all available resources at the disposal of Polonia, including our business leaders, various organizations, churches, local communities, press, and media groups. All should collaborate together along with the Polish American Congress to create funds, scholarships and support programs to help our aspiring Polish Youth. Let's take the very first step toward this process and invite, for a constructive dialog, all members from Parent School Boards, Teacher Associations along with the above mentioned various organizations. All of us at this juncture must share the responsibility of creating proper environment for expeditious success. And, if we do succeed in this process, the Polish American Congress and Polonia will once again, become a prominent political force shaping the political establishment of the United States of America.

We Can, We Must, and We Will !

Kazimierz Casey Chlebek, President
Polish American Congress - Illinois Division