20th Anniversary of the U.S. Congress Assistance to the new Senate and Sejm of the Republic of Poland

SENATE OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND

Senate Chancellery, June 2010
Concurrent resolution of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives authorizing the “Gift of Democracy” from the U.S. Congress to the new Sejm and Senate in Poland, October 3, 1989
2010 marks the 20th anniversary of the U.S. Congress Assistance given to the Senate and the Sejm in various forms over the first half of 1990’s. The idea of the assistance was initiated by the U.S. Senate by adopting the Gift of Democracy program follo-

Letter of Professor Andrzej Gwizd, Director of the Sejm Library, to the Librarian of Congress James H. Billington concluding the American visit to Poland, February 1990

Representatives appointed a two-party, five-person Special Task Force on the Development of Parliamentary Institutions in Eastern Europe, named Frost Task Force after its chairman, Congressman Martin Frost; it was later called Frost-Solomon Task Force, to commemorate the support given by the Republican Minority Leader, Gerald B. Solomon. The other three Task Force members were congressmen: Douglas Bosco, Bart Gordon and Jim Leach.

In the fall of 1989, after the June election – which included fully free election to the Senate and partially-free election to the Sejm – Senator Pete Domenici, a Republican from New Mexico, paid a visit to Warsaw, where he met with Polish members of parliament elected in democratic elections. The delegation which participated in the conference on the role of parliament in the process of building the state economic policy included four eminent congressmen: Walter Mondale, former Vice-President and senator, chairman of NDI (National Democratic Institute); Howard Baker, former Senate Republican Minority Leader; Thomas Eagleton, former senator and democrat and James R. Jones, democrat, former chairman of the Budget Committee of the House of Representatives. The delegation met, among others, with Andrzej Stelmachowski, President of the Senate, Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Bronislaw Geremek, chairman of the Civic Parliamentary Club.

As a result of its activity and support of many other senators, the U.S. Congress senators passed the decision to “give the new Polish parliament a unique, first gift of democracy in the form of most urgently needed technical assistance”, to quote Domenici.

The Polish parliament was the first legislative body in Central and Eastern Europe to have received the U.S. assistance.

In its resolution of 26 October 1989, the U.S. Congress decided that in view of the historical process of organizing the first parliament in Poland in more than half a century with a majority of members democratically elected, the parliament dedicated to social and economic reforms and individual freedom on the one hand, and on the other lacking experience, training, technical equipment, research service and parliamentary procedure, the Congress, with its well established legislative operations capability, approved the Gift of Democracy from the U.S. Congress to the new Senate and Sejm in Poland. The gift included hardware, software, training and study visits deemed most needed in the process of implementing an effective parliamentary system in Poland.

Letter from five Representatives, members of the Task Force on the Development of Parliamentary Institutions in Eastern Europe, to the Polish Senate and Sejm Marshals presenting a report following the visit to Poland, May 25, 1990.
In 1989, the Congress allocated USD 2.25 million for Gift of Democracy program, which sum was disbursed over the following years. The assistance process was administered by the Secretary of State Walter (Joe) Stewart, his deputy, Ms. Jeri Thomson as well as the Chancellery of the Polish Sejm and Senate. In the early 1990’s, renowned specialists of the Congressional Research Service, Walter Oleszek and John Hardt as well as CRS Deputy Director William H. Robinson started a series of visits at the Polish parliament in order to determine the needs and the scope of assistance. The Congressional Research Service was responsible for training and study visits of both: American experts at the Polish parliament and the Senate and Sejm employees at
the US Congress. As a result of mutual visits, research service concepts were developed for the Polish parliament. During their first visits at the US Congress and state legislatures, the representatives of the Polish Sejm and Senate had the opportunity to learn how a parliament functions in a democratic state.
However, the most urgent need for the Polish parliament was to provide modern equipment, including computerization as well as to set up a system for publishing stenographic records on the next day after the session. It is hard to believe now that one of the first orders of the Senate Proceedings Office and the then Legal Office placed in response to the assistance offer listed typing machines on top of the list, before computers and printers. The order also included answering machines, photocopiers, dictaphones and fax machines.

The people who greatly contributed to the technical assistance included heads and personnel of IT services of both Houses of the US Congress, such as Robert D. Harris (Senate), John F. Kelley (CRS) or Catherine Brickman and William Freeman (House of Representatives).
In mid-1990's, Gift of Democracy program started delivering to the Sejm and Senate computer hardware, printers, photocopiers as well as large printing presses and equipment for reading and printing microfiche and microfilm contents. To present the scale of the assistance, the deliveries included over 300 computers and nearly as many printers. The assistance program, in addition to hardware, also included software, access to legal and information databases, as well as books and professional magazine subscriptions, including CD publications, which became a seed capital for

Letter from the Secretary of the U.S. Senate Walter Joe Stewart to the Head of the Chancellery of the Senate of Poland Wojciech Sawicki on the final shipment of equipment under Phase II of the “Gift of Democracy”, January 1991.

Letter of the Polish Sejm and Senate officials, Przemysław Grudziński and Jarosław Deminet to Jeri Thomson, Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Senate, on the subject of the final procurement of equipment under “Gift of Democracy”, April 1992.
the future library of the research office of the Senate Chancellery.

One must not forget urgently needed and highly valuable assistance in the form of English language classes given to the parliament personnel in 1989–1991 by employees of the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw, mainly on a voluntary basis. The process was managed by Ms. Helen Davies, wife of John Davies, the then US ambassador.

Frost Task Force program, headed by Kristi E. Walseth, the head of congressman Martin Frost’s office, was launched in 1991 and operated until 1995, utilizing resources of CRS, IT services of the House of Representatives, commission services and house sessions. The program value closed at over USD 4 million. The assistance program included continuous delivery of professional literature and magazines in line with orders placed, library materials as well as office equipment and hardware. It seems that the most important part of the program included training for the Polish parliament personnel organized at CRS. The training touched upon all the issues in which the services had to be fluent in order to make the parliament an effective legislator: from the foundations of the democratic system and legislative procedures to IT and research support.

Thanks to the program heads including William H. Robinson, Mary Nell Bryant, Nancy A. Davenport as well as numerous experts and staff representing the CRS, the Library of Congress, the Senate Library and other U.S. Congress services, the training was provided to numerous employees of the

Meeting in the framework of the study visit in the USA of the Polish Senate and Sejm functionaries: Tadeusz Chabiera (Sejm), Teresa Krynicka (Sejm), Andrzej Krauczyk (Sejm), Danuta Grabowska (Senate), Maria Borejza (Sejm), Grażyna Szymalska (Senate), May 1991

Training in the framework of the CRS Parliamentary Institute, 1991.

Jacek Michalowski, Senate of Poland Chancellery, Przemysław Grudziński, Sejm of Poland Chancellery, William H. Robinson, (CRS)

Training within the framework of the Parliamentary Institute established by CRS under Frost-Solomon Task Force, 1991.


Training in the framework of the CRS Parliamentary Institute, presentation of the data bases, 1992.

Mary Nell Bryant, Aletta Waterhouse – CRS, Frost Task Force
Kristi Walseth (second from the left) – Frost Task Force, William Robinson (third from the left), Nancy Davenport (second from the right), Mary Ellen Callaban (third from the right) – CRS, Frost Task Force


Moment to relax – participation in the Annual Meeting of National Conference of State Legislatures, training in the CRS Parliamentary Institute, July 1993.
Katalin Haraszti, Library of the Hungarian Parliament, nn, Mary Nell Bryant, CRS, Hanna Pieszewska, Polish Sejm Library, Małgorzata Korzeniowska, Senate of Poland Chancellery

Anita Dudina, Latvian Parliament, Jacek Michalowski and Ewa Naurocka, Senate of Poland Chancellery, Wojciech Kalisiewicz and Barbara Karamać, Polish Sejm Library
Polish parliament, both in Poland and in the USA, where, within the CRS framework, a special structure was set up: the Parliamentary Institute, which organized training sessions for Central and Eastern Europe parliamentary services several times a year. The training program was customized to individual trainee needs and included working with the representatives of the respective Congress services. Seminar participants included personnel of various services: apart from research services experts, there were secretaries of commissions, plenary sessions, IT services, information and press personnel, legal and international affairs personnel. During their study visits in the USA, the representatives of CEE parliamentary services had the opportunity to participate in national conferences, such as SLAC (Specialist Library Association Conference) or NCSL (National Conference of State Legislatures), accompanied by exhibitions presenting the latest organizational and technology solutions in given areas. For IT specialists from Poland and other new democracies a visit at the world largest IT conference COMDEX was organized in 1992 within the framework of the program. There were also specialist conferences organized in Budapest, Prague and Tallinn.


The technical assistance provided by CRS experts greatly influenced the decision on forming an Analyses and Documentation Office of the Senate Chancellery as well as Bureau of Research of the Sejm Chancellery, followed by development of the operating concept for those institutions. As a result of the cooperation efforts, several international conferences were organized in Poland, e.g. on the Sejm research services (Pultusk, 21–23.06.1992), information technology in parliaments (Pultusk, 20–22.06.1994), parliamentary rules of procedure and practice (Pultusk, 08–11.05.1994) followed by post-conference publications (Parliamentary Research Organization, Przemysław Grudziński, Wiesław Staśkiewicz, Warszawa 1992; Information Technology in Parliaments, by Jarosław Deminet, Warszawa 1994; Rules of Procedure and Parliamentary Practice, by Danuta Łukasz, Wiesław Staśkiewicz, Warszawa 1995 – published in Russian and English).
As a result of the successful launch of Frost-Solomon Task Force program and Parliamentary Institute, they became model institutions to the US Congress, and are now referred to as an example by American congressmen, such as David Price (member of the US Congress delegation to Poland in 1992, headed by Martin Frost), when applying for programs aimed at strengthening democracy throughout the world. The proof of Frost Task Force program team’s commitment and appreciation expressed by the Congress is the fact that the experience of CRS specialists – William Robinson, Francis Miko, Paul Rundquist, Mary Nell Bryant and Kristi Walseth, the head of Frost’s office and program director – is still used in new, contemporary assistance programs offered to 13 countries within House Democracy Partnership.
Congressional delegation — members of the Frost Task Force and the officials in Warsaw, Senat Hall, April 1992

Representatives Martin Frost and David Price, Polish senator Edward Wende, Head of the Chancellery of the Polish Senate Wojciech Sawicki, representative John P. Hammerschmidt, Deputy Marshal of the Senate Zofia Kuratowska, Polish senators Tomasz Jagodziński and Krzysztof Piesiewicz

John Kelley (CRS) and Representative Martin Frost

Congressional delegation - members of the Frost Task Force and the officials in Warsaw, Senat Hall, April 1992

Representatives David Price and Martin Frost, Head of the Chancellery of the Polish Senate Wojciech Sawicki, Polish senators Edward Wende and Tomasz Jagodziński

Congressional delegation — members of the Frost Task Force and the officials in Warsaw, Senate Information Office, April 1992

Jarosław Deminet, Senate of Poland Chancellery, William Freeman, House of Representatives, Representatives John P. Hammerschmidt, Martin Frost and David Price, Cathy Brickman House of Representatives, Head of the Senate of Poland Chancellery Wojciech Sawicki, Kristi Walseth, Chief of Staff, Frost Task Force

Representatives David Price, John P. Hammerschmidt and Martin Frost, William Freeman, House of Representatives, Jaroslav Deminet, Senate of Poland Chancellery

Journal published by the Sejm Chancellery relating the visit of the U.S. Congress delegation, April 1992.

As a result of establishing professional services of the Polish parliament, they were in turn able to support building similar services in parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe, including in particular information, research and IT offices. Employees of the Polish parliament provided expert advice during subsequent editions of Frost Task Force program, e.g. in Estonia. They also shared their knowledge and experience during study visits at the Senate and Sejm organized under the program for regional parliaments employees, including Albania, Lithuania, Estonia and Bulgaria.

Jiří Brixi, Karel Sosna


Zana Buçi, Vjollca Hysenbegasi


Standing: Ivana Francová, Jindřiška Vačková, Olga Karfiková, Helena Dolečková, Jiří Rubin; sitting: Alexandra Šulcová, Pavlina Kindlová, Tomáš Samek, Mary Nell Bryant (CRS), Karel Sosna i Jiří Brixi
The network of contacts among parliaments within the region built as a result of the US Congress programs later developed into a cooperation network, in particular in the area of library studies and research.

American assistance provided during the first years of the Polish transformation greatly contributed to building the foundations for effective parliament operations and strengthening the parliament as a main institution for democracy. The services established by the Senate and Sejm at that time have become model of reference for parliamentary services in countries included in the transformation process.
U.S. Congressmen, U.S. Congress Officials and Staff committed together with U. S. Government representatives to assisting the new Senate and Sejm of Poland over the first half of 1990's

1. Congressmen

- The resolution initiating the Gift of Democracy was signed by the following senators:

- The following members were appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives Thomas S. Foley to the Task Force on the Development of Parliamentary Institutions in Eastern Europe (known as Frost-Solomon Task Force):

- Paid visits to Poland successively:

2. U.S. Congress and government officials and staff working for the assistance programs

- U.S. Senate: Walter Joe Stewart (Secretary of the Senate), Jeri Thomson (Assistant Secretary of the Senate), Michael E. Bartell, Robert W. McCormick, Roger K. Haley, Robert Harris, Ronald T Ledlow, Ann Womeldorf.

- U.S. House of Representatives and congressmen’s offices: Kristi Walseth (Frost Task Force Chief of Staff), Linda Berdine, James W. McCormick, Cathy Brickman, Bud Collins, Joseph R. Crapa, William E. Freeman, James M. Kulikowski, Karen L. Lightfoot, Tom O'Donnel.


- Congressional Research Service: Joseph E. Ross (Director), William H. Robinson, Mary Nell Bryant, Stanley Bach, Sandra A. Baumgardner, Vita Bite, Mary Ellen Callahan, Linda H. Cox, Nancy A. Davenport.


- USIA: Walter Raymond, Ann M. Chermak, Anna E. Wilbik.