

Dear Friends,

As you learned in our winter edition, members of the US Congress have been joining an exciting and truly historic initiative, the *Czech Caucus*, which highlights the importance and depth of the existing friendship and cooperation between the US and Czech Republic. The *Czech Caucus* itself provides a forum for the members to easily voice and advance issues regarding US-Czech relations and promote a deeper understanding of the countries' mutual political, cultural and economic ties.

On February 27, 2008, the *Czech Caucus* was inaugurated by Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek and members of the US Congress co-chairing the new body, namely Senator E. Benjamin Nelson (Nebraska), Senator George V. Voinovich (Ohio), Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher (California, 10th District), Congressman Joe Barton (Texas, 6th District), Congressman Daniel Lipinski (Illinois, 3rd District) and Congressman Thaddeus G. McCotter (Michigan, 11th District). During the inauguration, Prime Minister Topolánek expressed his deep appreciation for the highly successful bipartisan initiative.

The American Friends of the Czech Republic would like to give special recognition to these chairmen for being at the fore front of evolving US-Czech relations even further. Specifically, Senator Nelson has been a long time friend of the Czech Republic and supportive of the large Czech-American population in Nebraska. Senator Voinovich, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is a long-time supporter of the Czech-American community in Ohio. Besides being a strong advocate of NATO enlargement, Senator Voinovich has played a crucial role updating the US Visa Waiver Program (VWP), strengthening security measures and putting the Czech Republic on a path towards inclusion in the program in order to ease travel for Czechs to the United States.

Congresswoman Tauscher was a staunch advocate for the Czech Republic to join NATO and has always been a supporter of strong transatlantic relations. Congressman Barton remains positively committed to the Czech community in his district, as Texas boasts the largest Czech-American population in the US. Congressman Lipinski, a supporter of the Czech Republic joining the VWP, is also engaged with regards to the Czech community in the Chicago area. Congressman McCotter, like his fellow Congress members, has also been keenly interested in Czech-American relations and the country's acceptance into the VWP. All the honorable chairmen deserve much credit for their strong contributions to the Czech-US partnership.

Thus far, the following Senators and Representatives have followed the co-chairmen's lead and joined the *Czech Caucus* in their respective chambers of Congress:

Senators

Robert P. Casey (Pennsylvania)
Bryan L. Dorgan (North Dakota)
Dianne Feinstein (California)
Chuck Grassley (Iowa)
Joseph Lieberman (Connecticut)
Mel Martinez (Florida)
Ted Stevens (Alaska)

Congressmen

Michael Conaway (Texas, 11th District)
Danny Davis (Illinois, 7th District)
Lincoln Diaz-Balart (Florida, 21st District)
Mario Diaz-Balart (Florida, 25th District)
Lloyd Dogget (Texas, 25th District)
Phil English (Pennsylvania, 3rd District)
Jeff Fortenberry (Nebraska, 1st District)
Sheila Jackson Lee (Texas, 18th District)

Dave Loebsack (Iowa, 2nd District)
Don Manzullo (Illinois, 16th District)
Harry Mitchell (Arizona, 5th District)
Solomon Ortiz (Texas, 27th District)

Joe Sestak (Pennsylvania, 7th District)
John Shimkus (Illinois, 19th District)
Michael Turner (Ohio, 3rd District)

Please express your support of the *Czech Caucus* in the US Congress by contacting your Senators and Representative and requesting that they become members of the *Czech Caucus*. With this membership and as described above, your Senators and Representative shall have immediate access to a forum that is solely focused on working on US-Czech issues. If your Senator or Representative happens to be one of the honorable Chairmen or members, please write to him or her in praise of his or her progressive vision and understanding of the significance of US-Czech relations.

Again, I am thrilled to inform you of the inauguration of this historic bipartisan collaboration.

Sincerely,

President of the American Friends of the Czech Republic