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news



July 17,2015
THE NFCA ELECTED A NEW PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE BOARD
The National Federation of Croatian Americans Successfully Concludes its 22nd Annual Assembly; the new NFCA president is Mijo Radocaj of Ohio

The **National Federation of Croatian Americans Cultural Foundation (NFCA)** convened on **June 5th** for its 22nd Delegates Assembly and annual Friday evening Wine Tasting Fundraiser.

The well attended reception was for Croatia's Special Olympics team and was held at the National Headquarters of the Croatian Fraternal Union (CFU) in Pittsburgh, PA. Over **220 attendees** at the fundraiser raised more than **\$2,500 for 'Team Croatia'**. These talented athletes will meet other countries in Los Angeles for the international competition set to begin July 25 with a gala kickoff of the games. NFCA and friends were wined, dined, and entertained by several music ensembles, including ballads by legendary Lettermen founder Tony Butala. Other excellent musical entertainment was provided by Zabava, Mikey Dee, Ponoc, and Trubaduri.

NEW PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE BOARD

On Saturday, June 6, the NFCA elected a new President and Executive Board at the Federation's annual meeting conducted in the Boardroom of the CFU. In addition, the Federation amended its by-laws and moved from a Regional Vice President framework to at-large representation.




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CROATIAN ADDRESS BOOK (2700 addresses)



photo: NFCA Board of directors



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New president is: Mijo Radocaj of Ohio.

Historically, Mr. Radocaj was the fifth President of the Federation when he served in 1998. His Executive

Vice President is: Zvonko Labas of Maryland.

Elected to another term as National Treasurer was Jay Hunter of Pennsylvania.

The remaining officers include three Vice Presidents: Frank Jerbich of Illinois, Steve Rukavina of Pennsylvania, and John Kraljic of New York. Jim Kresnik of Nebraska was elected Officer-at-Large, and Bernadette Luketich-Sikaras was added to the Board.

Secretary will be : Vlatka Persin of Maryland.

Paul Tonsetic-Kunder congratulated the newly elected officers and Board members. He will now serve as Immediate Past President.



photo: Mike Doly and Paul Tonsetic-Kunder

The NFCA was pleased to host a special presentation by US Representative **Mike Doyle** of Pennsylvania in the afternoon public session. Congressman Doyle, a founding member in 2005 of the Croatian Caucus in the House of Representatives, drew special attention to the contributions of the Croatians to economic and political life of the United States. Rep. Doyle's district is the home for over 30,000 Croatian Americans – possibly the largest community of Americans of Croatian heritage in the US.

Rep. Doyle drew important attention to the leadership of Representatives **Janice Hahn of California** and David Joyce of Ohio – the current Co-Chairs of the Croatian Caucus - and the important support they have provided for Croatia's continued Western alliance integration and full membership ascension into NATO and the EU. The Congressman responded to an important question from the audience on the importance of continued domestic energy source diversification for Croatia and the country's crucial leadership in the Western Balkans on these and related matters. A copy of Congressman Doyle's speech before the NFCA's leadership is attached.

Ambassador **Jadranka Negodic** of Bosnia and Herzegovina thanked NFCA for all its assistance to her country during her three years of diplomatic service. Ambassador Negodic has successfully represented her relatively new nation-state in Washington on very complex political and economic issues - affecting both BiH and the Balkans at large. Croatia's Deputy Chief of Mission, **Mario Skunka**, discussed at length matters related to Croatia's readiness for inclusion in an expanded Visa Waiver Program (VWP) with the US. DCM Skunka also spoke eloquently to the Assembly Delegates about the improving economy in Croatia and the many benefits of a future Double Taxation Treaty between our two countries.



photo: Mario Skunka (on the left),Jadranka Negodic,Vlatka Persin and Mijo Radocaj (new NFCA president)

Zvonko Labas and John Kraljic, both re-elected NFCA Vice Presidents, expertly reviewed the charter and goals of the Croatian government's Advisory Council for Croats Abroad. They both were appointed members two years ago and remain actively involved on a variety of issues. The Diaspora Council, as it has become known in the US, is scheduled to reconvene in late July in Zagreb.

Joe Foley, Public Affairs Director, addressed the NFCA's Delegates for his 16th time. Mr. Foley provided updates on the success to date of the organization's promotion of a Double Tax Treaty for Croatia before the US Department of the Treasury and in concert with the Croatian Embassy in Washington. Other issues receiving attention in his presentation included: (1) the planned growth for the Congressional Croatian Caucus, (2) the potential consideration of Visa Waiver Program expansion in the new Congress, and, (3) Rep. Janice Hahn's legislative work in Congress encouraging effective foreign policies to promote and guarantee equal political, economic, and religious rights for all the peoples of Bosnia. Mr. Foley also overviewed for the Delegates the varied and extensive press coverage - in Croatia, Bosnia, and the US - which had been generated by NFCA's issues development and related activities during the prior year.

Paul Tonsetic-Kunder used the occasion of his retirement after two years as President to bestow several NFCA-sponsored awards on deserving individuals for their selfless contributions to the NFCA's success over the years. This also included a special President's Award to Melania and Zvonko Labas for their generous gift of funds to the NFCA to continue the organization's reliable representation of all Croatian Americans in Washington and elsewhere. Additional recognition for their valuable contributions was also given to Jay Hunter, Bill Vergot, Frank Jerbich, and Anne Pavlich. A special appreciation for improving the lives of the citizens of Bosnia and her tireless work to expand the present peace in her country was awarded to BiH Ambassador Jadranka Negodic.

NFCA's newly elected President, **Mijo Radocaj**, closed the Assembly. He specifically expressed his and the entire Federation's thanks to retiring President Paul Tonsetic-Kunder and to Anne Pavlich for her longtime service as as National Secretary. President Radocaj also praised Bill Vergot, another former NFCA President, for his tireless work in developing this year's Assembly program. Last, but not least, Mr. Radocaj was effusive in his praise of Mr. Ed Pazo, CFU's new President, and his entire Headquarters staff: "Mr. Pazo, puno hvala to you, your talented national officers, and the dedicated staff of the CFU for their generous contributions of time and much appreciated hospitality during NFCA's very memorable weekend in Pittsburgh."

Next year's 23rd Annual Assembly has been planned for the same timeframe in 2016 and will be held in Washington, DC. Those whom may be interested in serving as Delegates should mark their calendars and contact a member of the NFCA's Executive Board.

The NFCA is the national umbrella organization established in 1993 for Croatian Americans, related professional associations, and the many fraternal lodges that collectively represent approximately 130,000 members. For individual membership and chapter information, recent newsletters, opportunities to donate to the NFCA, and for other Croatian American news please visit our web site: www.nfcacf.org.

by Joe Foley/ HIC website

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