



THE CROATIAN AMERICAN ADVOCATE

*The Official Newsletter of the NFCA
and the NFCA Cultural Foundation*



*Frank Jerbich, Joe Brigich, Ambassador Neven Jurica, Ed Andrus,
and Ed Pazo in Omaha, NE at the convention Banquet*

NFCA CONCLUDES 12TH ANNUAL CONVENTION IN OMAHA, NE

The National Federation of Croatian Americans (NFCA) Twelfth Annual Assembly of Delegates came to a close on Sunday June 5, 2005 after a very successful convention. Over thirty Croatian American leaders and activists from a number of Croatian organizations throughout the United States met in Omaha, NE to plan the NFCA strategies and programs for the coming year with a renewed emphasis on the Congressional Croatian Caucus and membership development, particularly with young people.

The Assembly officially opened on Saturday morning with a state of the organization address by NFCA President Ed Andrus who detailed the accomplishments of the NFCA over the past year. Mr. Andrus emphasized the critical positions that the NFCA takes in Washington, DC on behalf of Croatian Americans and the Republic of Croatia. He highlighted the role that the NFCA played in the successful formation of the Croatian Congressional Caucus. Mr. Andrus spoke about how the NFCA organized and hosted the reception for the launch of the Croatian Congressional Caucus with the able assistance of the Croatian Embassy. He pointed out that there are 44 members of the Caucus today, more than 10% of the Members of the House of Representatives. He detailed the other legislative successes that the NFCA has had during the last year including NFCA Treasurer Zvonko Labas' testimony before the Human Rights Caucus in Congress on the rise of ethnic violence in Vojvodina and the subsequent success in amending House Resolution # 726 on Serbian Elections to include mention of Vojvodina and the need for protection of minority rights. Mr. Andrus went on to discuss the steps that the NFCA must undertake to improve its financial and organizational health.

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NFCA Leaders with Croatian Prime Minister Sanader, Minister Bozo Biskupic (Culture), and Ambassador Neven Jurica

NFCA SUPPORTS ABSENTEE BALLOTING IN CROATIA AND CALLS FOR REFORMS FOR DIASPORA REPRESENTATION IN THE SABOR

This past week, Ed Andrus, President of the National Federation of Croatian Americans (NFCA), delivered a letter to Neven Jurica, Croatia's Ambassador to the United States, in which he advised the Ambassador that the NFCA supported efforts to introduce absentee balloting to allow Croatian citizens living in the US to participate in Croatian elections in a more meaningful way.

Mr. Andrus noted that at the NFCA's recent Annual Assembly in June a number of delegates stated that they believed that the Croatian-American "community feels increasingly discouraged over Croatia's political status. Foremost among the reasons for this is that the current Croatia electoral law prevents the Croatian Diaspora from participating in Croatian elections and politics in any meaningful way."

Mr. Andrus wrote that Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader's recent proposal to institute absentee balloting "must be given serious consideration." Mr. Andrus pointed out that despite the large numbers of Croatians living in the United States, less than 2,000 Croatians in the United States voted in recent elections. Mr. Andrus attributed this to the current voting system in place outside of Croatia which requires Croatian citizens to travel to a handful of polling stations in the US. Mr. Andrus wrote that "rather than engendering interest in Croatian politics, the current system results in the effective disenfranchisement of Croatian citizens in the United States and around the world. Without an amendment to the electoral laws providing for absentee voting, the political underrepresentation of the worldwide Croatian Diaspora will remain chronic."

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Message from the NFCA President Edward Anthony Andrus



The NFCA's top priority continues to be the admission of the Republic of Croatia into NATO. The accomplishment of that goal will provide a military security unknown to the people of Croatia in their long history. A period of peace several decades long will give them the necessary time to implement required reforms and develop free market understanding throughout their society. This should allow them to focus their energies and talents on building a solid economy and providing for the well-being of their people for the foreseeable future.

This past year many strides were taken in pursuit of this lofty goal. Foremost among them was the establishment of the Congressional Croatian Caucus. On July 19, 2005, in a ceremony held in the foyer of the Rayburn House Office Building, Croatia's Prime Minister, Ivo Sanader, honored co-chairmen Congressmen George Radanovich (R-CA) and Peter Visclosky (D-IN), for their leadership in forming the Croatian Caucus. Dr. Sanader bestowed upon them The Order of Duke Branimir with Ribbon. The Croatian Caucus will be a powerful resource in building the case for Croatia's entry into NATO.

The NFCA continues to work on promoting the Caucus with Congressional Members, especially those on key committees, and to date a total of 47 Members have joined, far exceeding expectations. The NFCA is also working with influential Members and their staffs to keep the focus on our objectives and to serve up issues and ideas for consideration by the Caucus. None of our goals are a foregone conclusion and the NFCA must continue to engage with US governmental agencies to better understand the barriers to be resolved for Croatia's entry into NATO, as well as to take issue with unrealistic opposing views. In this Newsletter you will find more about our on-going efforts in this regard from the direct participation of NFCA members as well as from NFCA Director of Government Affairs, Joseph Foley.

Last month at the NFCA annual convention, held this year in Omaha, Nebraska, our delegates brought to our attention an important issue for Croatian citizens living in the United States regarding their inability to participate in Croatia's elections in a realistic way. In order to vote, they must go to one of several polling places located in major American cities. Consequently, only several thousand votes are tallied across the US, a major under-representation of the Croatia Diaspora here. After consideration, the NFCA voted to champion the cause of absentee balloting for Croatia similar to that in the US. Concurrently, Prime

Minister Sanader announced in Croatia, a proposal for absentee balloting for the worldwide Diaspora. The NFCA has since delivered a letter to Croatia Ambassador Neven Jurica stating our support of Dr. Sanader's proposal. In addition, the NFCA has asked that the Croatian Parliament consider a different allocation of seats so that the worldwide Diaspora has its own representation in the Sabor.

I continue to be amazed at how much the NFCA accomplishes with so little resource and continue to attribute this to the formidability and passion of our active members, all of whom work on a voluntary basis. They understand the issues and work them to completion in selfless ways using their own time and money. One of our big challenges is fundraising, an unpleasant but necessary activity in order to maintain our fully-staffed Washington, D. C. office, pay for stationary and postage, print publications, and to afford the lobbying which is essential to our efforts if we are to achieve our goals. We have also recently revamped the NFCA website and given it the name of NFCAonline.com; this is just the beginning and we will continue to enhance this capability as time and finances allow.

I want all of our members to know how much we appreciate your donations, both annual and otherwise, and that we are committed to using your money wisely. To augment your contributions in an attempt to cover our budget, this year we continued our successful Croatian wine tasting events across the US, and for the first time we published an NFCA Daily Number Calendar. To those of you who enjoyed the camaraderie of a Croatian wine-tasting and/or bought an NFCA Daily Number Calendar, and those members who worked on those events, I want to extend my sincere thanks. I want to especially thank Peter Karlovich and Steve Herforth for the June 17th wine tasting fund raiser at their "Pittsburgh Palace". This was the 3rd fund raiser that Peter Karlovich has held for the NFCA in the past two years and this time I had the pleasure to present to him a plaque representing the NFCA President's Award for his generous and on-going support of the NFCA.

" RECOGNIZING CROATIA'S NATIONAL DAY "
(Congressional Record Extensions of Remarks - June 22, 2005)

SPEECH OF

HON. GEORGE RADANOVICH

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22, 2005

Mr. RADANOVICH.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Hon. PETER J. VISCLOSKY and myself, in our capacity as Co-chairs of the Congressional Croatian Caucus, on the occasion of National Day of the Republic of Croatia, June 25, I rise to recognize the significant progress the country of Croatia has made in gaining recognition and responsibility within the international community since its independence.

Croatia has come a long way in the last 14 years and has experienced a number of important developments in the process. Overcoming the legacies of communism and armed aggression, Croatia is now well on the path towards full membership in the Euro-Atlantic community. All these achievements mark Croatia's successful transition in political and economic reforms to a thriving democracy and market economy, as well as depicting the Croatian Government's commitment to the rule of law and human rights.

Croatia's strategic objectives to enter NATO and the European Union, as well as strengthen and deepen its ties with the United States, are the driving forces behind its foreign and security policy, and defense reforms. Integration into the Euro-Atlantic Community will enable Croatia to assume a more active role within the community of democracies that share the same values, principles and interests. Active participation by Croatian military personnel in a number of peacekeeping operations worldwide, including the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan, displays Croatia's credibility as a future NATO member state. Furthermore, Croatia has a track record of cooperation with NATO allies through the PfP.

Mr. Speaker, it is clearly in our national interest to encourage peace and stability in the region of Southeastern Europe. To this end, the role of the Croatian American community and their representatives in the nation's capitol, as an inherent component of the U.S.-Croatia partnership, cannot be overlooked. They represent a vital bridge between our two countries in order to strengthen deep historical and cultural links between the United States and Croatia since 1783. Special recognition should be given to the current Croatian government under the leadership of Dr. Ivo Sanader to solidify Croatia's place within the community of democratic nations and to move the country forward to becoming a model of stability, peace and cooperation throughout Southeastern Europe. END



*Congressman Cliff Stearns of Florida, Cook County
Commissioner Tony Pericia with NFCA Lobbyist Joe Foley*

Congressional Report from NFCA Government Relations Director Joe Foley

The NFCA's ardent push for the creation of Croatian Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives was successful during this session of Congress. At the Caucus kickoff reception earlier this session nearly a tenth of the House had joined the Croatian Caucus. Since then, the NFCA has continued to support the Co-Chairs, Representatives George Radanovich (R-CA) and Peter Visclosky (D-IN), and their staffs in hammering out press releases, policies, and legislative plans. In addition, Prime Minister Sanader on his recent visit to the US took some of his valuable time to meet with the Members of the Caucus. The PM awarded Co-Chairs Radanovich and Visclosky special commendations recently voted on by the Sabor (ie the Parliament).

The Croatian Caucus in the House now has nearly 50 Members and could continue to grow. We look forward to working with the Caucus on important legislation and resolutions that effectively support the NATO membership for Croatia, further economic expansion in Croatia, greater trade between Croatia and the US, and related issues. This column will work to keep the NFCA membership up to date on Caucus activities. In that regard, please see the Congressional Record statement on the occasion of National Day of the Republic of Croatia, June 25, submitted by the Caucus Co-Chairs reprinted in this newsletter. The contributions of interested Croatian Americans to the growing successful relationship between the US and Croatia is specifically referenced in this speech in the Congress.

The Congress also passed a ten year acknowledgement resolution condemning the massacre at Srebrenica in 1995. The NFCA weighed in heavily on the importance of these resolutions in the House and Senate. Please see Mr. Andrus' letter to Chairman Henry Hyde of the House International Relations Committee and Chairman Richard Lugar of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The two resolutions passed their respective bodies of Congress in June.

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NFCA President Ed Andrus and Frank Mac in Omaha



Ed Andrus and Peter Karlovich in Pittsburgh



Anne Pavlich at the Pittsburgh Wine Tasting



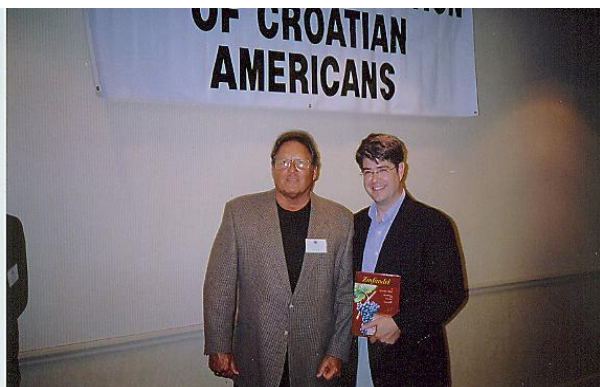
Ed Andrus and Steve Rukavina in Pittsburgh



Ed Andrus greeting Prime Minister Sanader



Ed Andrus and Congressman Lee Terry in Omaha



Jim Kresnik and Congressman Lee Terry in Omaha



Congressman Radanovich and Visclosky



Ambassador Neven Jurica with 2005 NFCA Board Members

OMAHA (Continued from page 1)

Past President Steven Rukavina delivered a report concerning the activities of the NFCA Business Development Committee which he chairs. Mr. Rukavina described the new initiatives that the NFCA Business Development Committee is pursuing to implement the U.S.-Croatia partnering initiative. Mr. Rukavina also discussed the current status of Group 100 which was formed at the World Summit of Croatian Business Leaders in Cleveland last year.

NFCA Development Director Erik Milman delivered the legislative report for Government Relations Director Joe Foley who was not able to attend. The report detailed the legislative successes and priorities for the NFCA during the past year including the formation of the Croatian Congressional Caucus. Mr. Milman highlighted the successes that the NFCA had in interacting with Members of Congress and Congressional staffs in implementing the NFCA legislative priorities, sometimes with short notice.

The Assembly of Delegates and guests heard from Croatian Ambassador Neven Jurica who was visiting Omaha for the very first time. He discussed Croatia's candidacy for NATO membership and what it will mean for Croatia. He also highlighted the recent developments in the relationship between Croatia and the United States, particularly the establishment of the Congressional Croatian Caucus. The Ambassador expressed his gratitude to the NFCA for its steadfast support of Croatia over the years and looks forward to the success of our shared goals. Tania Raguz, the First Secretary for Political Affairs at the Croatian Embassy also addressed the delegates on the Embassy perspective of Congressional relations and her work in Washington, DC. She highlighted the good working relationship that Embassy has with NFCA Government Relations Director, Joe Foley, and Development Director, Erik Milman, in achieving their legislative priorities.

The featured speaker of the Assembly was Congressman Lee Terry of Omaha who is a member of the Congressional Croatian Caucus. Congressman Terry is a long time friend of NFCA Vice President Jim Kresnik and the local Croatian American community. He spoke about his ties to the local Croatian Americans and the contributions that they have made in his legislative district. He spoke about how proud he was to be a member of the Congressional Croatian Caucus and of his strong support for the Republic of Croatia. He took questions from the delegates and mentioned that he would like to see more events where the Caucus is educated about the issues facing Croatia as well as have interaction with Croatian officials when they are visiting the United States.

NFCA President Ed Andrus conducted two highly successful workshops on the Congressional Caucus and membership development. Mr. Andrus explained the rules and role of the Caucus to the delegates. He then engaged with the delegates to solicit their creative ideas on how to deal effectively with the Caucus. The delegates were highly responsive and generated a list of actionable items on what the Caucus should be doing and on how to attract more Members of Congress to join. The membership workshop resulted in a renewed focus on cultural activities and in attracting young Croatian Americans to join the NFCA to add their support in helping the Old Homeland.

The NFCA Delegates concluded the meeting by electing new officers and members of its Board of Directors. The new officers are: Edward Andrus, President (PA), Joseph Brigich, Executive Vice President (PA), John Kraljic, Past President (NY), Zvonko Labas, Treasurer (MD), Miro Koletic, Secretary (CA), Steve Rukavina, Eastern Region Vice President (MD), Frank Jerbich, Central Region Vice President (IL), Jim Kresnik, Western Region Vice President (NE). The other Board members are John Balaich (MN), Louise Birt (MO), John Cindrich (PA), Joe Cupich (NE), Pat Gates (NE), Andrew Marcec (IL), Marie McGuckin (IL), Anne Pavlich (MD), Ed Pazo (PA), Mijo Radocaj (OH), Joseph Rukavina (MN), Bozidar Sichel (IL), Davor Sichel (IL), Otto Sutej (NE), William Vergot (PA), Connor Vlakancic (CA), Dr. Judy Vogelsang (MO), and Hilda Foley (CA).

The Assembly's formal activities ended with a dinner at the Croatian Hall for NFCA delegates and guests on Saturday evening, which was also attended by Ambassador Jurica and his wife. After dinner, on behalf of the NFCA, President Andrus presented a commemoration plaque to Mr. Frank Mac, the President of Croatian Cultural Society of Omaha, for the Society's continued support of the NFCA over the years and especially at this year's convention.

ABSENTEE BALLOT *(Continued from page 1)*

Mr. Andrus noted in his letter that a first step in dealing with the issue was to raise “awareness of the absentee ballot issue within the Croatian Government, media, and intellectual circles.” The NFCA is hopeful that it can assist in this effort by promoting assistance from American electoral officials and NGOs since the institution of absentee balloting has been around in the US for a long period of time.

In this regard, while not noted in the letter to Ambassador Jurica, Mr. Andrus separately stated that there is an apparent lack of appreciation for voting rights among some circles in Croatia. “I and my colleagues in the NFCA have often heard critics of Diaspora voting note that Croatians living abroad should not have the right to vote since they do not pay taxes in Croatia. I would note that in the United States it was long ago recognized when poll taxes in some of our southern states were declared illegal that voting is a fundamental right of citizenship and has nothing to do with paying taxes.”

Mr. Andrus’ letter to Ambassador Jurica also suggested that the Croatian government consider reforms to the present allocation of Diaspora representatives in the Croatian Sabor or Parliament. The letter noted that “the current system of consolidating the votes of Croatian citizens living in Western Europe, North America, Australia, and elsewhere with those living in Bosnia and Herzegovina effectively leaves those Croatian citizens living outside of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina with no representation in the Sabor. The large number of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina far outweighs the potential numbers of voters in other countries. We fully support the rights of Croatian citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue to vote for their own representatives to the Sabor; but if Croatia seeks to draw to itself the political, intellectual, economic, and social potential of its Diaspora living abroad, it must make provisions for representation of their interests and concerns in the Sabor as well.”



Prime Minister Sanader presenting a Croatian painting to Congressman Radanovich



Prime Minister Sanader bestowing the Order of Duke Branimir with Ribbon on Congressman Visclosky

SREBRENICA RESOLUTION SUPPORT LETTER

Chairman Richard Lugar, Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Chairman Henry Hyde, House International Relations Committee

Dear Chairman Lugar and Chairman Hyde:

On behalf of the National Federation of Croatian Americans (NFCA), I want to express our full support for Senate Resolution 134/House Resolution 199 condemning the massacre at Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Serb forces almost ten years ago. The innocent victims murdered there should be both solemnly remembered and honored, and their relatives and friends deserve to know their fate.

You are correctly admonishing the United Nations and its member states and they have acknowledged their failure to properly protect those who sought refuge in a United Nations declared "safe area". But more needs to be said regarding the United Nation's conduct if the dead are to be truly honored and if the United Nations and its member states are to constantly seek to ensure that this failure is not repeated in future crises and conflicts as you resolve.

- 1) **WEAPONS CONFICATION** -Prior to the slaughter in Srebrenica, United Nations forces required refugees desiring to enter the "safe area" to give up their weapons. Residents of nearby towns declined United Nations protection and kept their weapons. Consequently, those nearby towns were never attacked by Serb forces, only the defenseless residents of Srebrenica, whose U. N. protectors retreated in the face of Serb force, were attacked.
- 2) **ARMS EMBARGO** - The atrocities that occurred on many thousands of victims in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Croatia were in part a result of the arms embargo placed on those countries by the United Nations with the backing of the United States, thereby placing defenseless people in harm's way while the Serbs continued to manufacture weapons in their own plants in Serbia and wage aggression on sovereign states that were members of the U. N.
- 3) **COMMAND STRUCTURE** - A convoluted command structure was put in place to make NATO forces available to the United Nations forces on the ground who were undermanned and always susceptible to being taken hostage and not likely to ever initiate the "trigger point".
- 4) **PEACE KEEPERS VS. FIGHTERS** - The United Nations chose to face the onslaught of Serb forces with soldiers trained as peacekeepers rather than face force with force as they did many years ago in Korea where their solid reputation was first established. Many US troops paid the price for the UN to earn the reputation lost at Srebrenica!

- 5) **AGRESSORS REWARDED** - When the Dayton Accords finally brought peace, the aggressor Bosnian Serbs were rewarded with their own statelet, Republika Srpska, within Bosnia and Herzegovina!

Many thousands of unnecessary deaths occurred because of the above unfortunate events. The U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives should do what it can to help ensure that the United Nations and its member states never repeat these failures.

Thank you for remembering the many innocent victims who were murdered at the hands of Serb forces. If the NFCA may provide additional input on these important matters, this Resolution or related issues, please have your Committee or Subcommittee staff contact NFCA's government relations director, Mr. Joe Foley, on 301-294-0937.

Sincerely, Edward A. Andrus,
President National Federation of Croatian Americans

CONGRESSIONAL REPORT (Continued from page 3)

The importance of the NFCA's participation in the hearing that overviewed human right violations in the Vojvodina Province of Serbia and Montenegro was instrumental in having Croatia and Serbia and Montenegro officially address the matter as part of a signed pact on scientific cooperation in December of last year. The NFCA's series of important amendments to a follow up resolution were accepted at mark up during a meeting of the House Europe Subcommittee. At a subsequent meeting with Ambassador Neven Jurica, the NFCA was commended for its work on U.S. House Resolution 726 which emphasized that Serbia should address the abuse of minorities in the Province of Vojvodina. The Ambassador noted that a Joint Statement subsequently signed by Prime Minister Sanader and Serbia & Montenegro's President Marovic included wording related to important protection of ethnic minorities.

Again, it has been a pleasure to represent the NFCA here in Washington. I am proud of our continued accomplishments with the US Congress and Executive Branch.



Congressman Rohrabacher at the caucus launch



Frank Jerbich, Jim Kresnik, Marie McGuckin, Ed Andrus and Ambassador Jurica



Miro Koletic, Zvonko Labas, Jim Kresnik, Ed Andrus, Frank Jerbich, Joe Brigich, and Steve Rukavina



Jim Kresnik, Congressman Lee Terry, and new NFCA Board Member Darko Sicel of Chicago



Bill Vergot speaking at the Pittsburgh Wine Tasting

NFCA

National Federation of Croatian Americans

A Strong Advocate For Our Community

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