



**EASTERN  
EUROPEAN  
CONGRESS  
of OHIO**

Proponent Testimony  
Commission on Eastern European Affairs  
And  
Office of Eastern European Affairs  
Senate Bill 261

THANK YOU MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

AS THE WORLD CONTINUES TO GLOBALIZE, IT IS OF GREAT BENEFIT FOR OHIO TO CONTINUE TO BE INCREASINGLY AWARE OF OTHER CULTURES. THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED 5,500 TO 6,000 LANGUAGES AND CULTURES IN THE WORLD, LIVING IN ABOUT 200 COUNTRIES. UNDERSTANDING **CULTURES** (NOT NECESSARILY *COUNTRIES*, SINCE IT IS **CULTURES** THAT MAINTAIN VALUE SYSTEMS, BELIEFS AND PRACTICES) IS CRITICAL FOR BUSINESS, COMMUNITY AND EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGES TO PROSPER.



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BY INVOLVING THESE EXISTING POPULATIONS AND BECOMING AWARE OF ALL NATIONALITY AND STATELESS MINORITY CULTURES THAT MAKE UP OHIO, THEY CAN GARNER SUPPORT BY EXPRESSING TO OTHER GROUPS THE VALUE OF THEIR CULTURE AND HOW IMPORTANT THEY ARE TO OHIO.

IN THE 2010 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY, STATISTICS SHOW THAT 1.1 MILLION OHIO RESIDENTS CLAIM THEY HAVE EASTERN EUROPEAN HERITAGE. THE LARGEST EASTERN EUROPEAN POPULATIONS IN OHIO ARE POLISH, HUNGARIAN AND SLOVAK.

SINCE ONE OF THESE POPULATIONS IN OHIO IS SLOVAK, I AM ASKING FOR AN AMENDMENT TO SB 261 SECTION 107.23 B (2) ADD THE WORD SLOVAK.

OHIO'S RESIDENTS OF EASTERN EUROPEAN HERITAGE HAVE BEEN UNNOTICED.

OHIO SENATORS, OHIO HOUSE REPRESENTATIVES AND THEIR OFFICE STAFF STRUGGLE TO BE IN CONTACT WITH OHIO'S EASTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNITY. IT IS HARD FOR THE SENATORS AND REPS TO SCHEDULE THEMSELVES AND/OR THEIR STAFF TO ATTEND MEETINGS AND OTHER IMPORTANT EVENTS THAT SHAPE OHIO'S EASTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNITY BECAUSE OF THE LIMITED TIME THEY HAVE. NO ONE CAN BE EVERYWHERE AT ALL TIMES.

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ONE RECENT EXAMPLE OCCURED A FEW MONTHS AGO WHICH WAS A HISTORIC FIRST FOR THE OHIO BULGARIAN COMMUNITY. AN HONORARY CONSUL FOR THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA WAS NAMED, AND THERE WAS A CEREMONIAL EVENT THAT TOOK PLACE IN THE CINCINNATI AREA. ALTHOUGH SEVERAL POLITICAL LEADERS WERE INVITED NO ONE SHOWED UP.

KNOWING THAT EVERYONE IS VERY BUSY, AN EASTERN EUROPEAN COMMISSION CAN CERTAINLY EXTEND APPROPRIATE STATE OF OHIO REPRESENTATION TOWARD THE EASTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNITY. THESE ONGOING OCCASIONS WOULD MAKE THESE PEOPLES FEEL VALUED.

WHILE RELATIVELY FEW PEOPLE HAVE A BROAD IDEA WHERE THE VARIOUS COUNTRIES OF EASTERN EUROPE ARE, THROUGH BETTER EDUCATION THIS CAN BE OVERCOME. FOR EXAMPLE ONLY ABOUT 1 IN 6 AMERICANS CAN IDENTIFY WHERE UKRAINE IS ON A MAP.

SOME OHIO EASTERN EUROPEAN NATIONALITIES THAT LIVE IN OHIO HAVE NEVER HAD A HOMELAND COUNTRY. THE OHIO CARPATHO-RUSYN POPULATION, IS ABOUT 80,000, SOME OF WHO LIVE BETWEEN CLEVELAND/AKRON AND YOUNGSTOWN. THIS CONCEPT OF PEOPLE WITHOUT A COUNTRY IS HARD FOR SOME TO COMPREND. AN EASTERN EUROPEAN COMMISSION CAN WORK ON THIS SOLUTION BY

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INCREASING CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL AWARENESS ON A STATE LEVEL ABOUT EASTERN EUROPEANS.

IN ADDITION, A COMMISSION CAN WORK WITH THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO INCORPORATE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT EASTERN EUROPEANS INTO THEIR EXISTING CURRICULUM.

THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION HAS DONE A FINE JOB OF EDUCATING STUDENTS ABOUT OTHER GROUPS OF PEOPLE; WE ASK THAT EASTERN EUROPEANS BE INCLUDED TO ADD TO THE MULTI-CULTURAL DIVERSITY OF OHIO.

DIFFERENT HOLIDAYS SUPPLEMENT THE VARIETY OF OHIO WITH ITS RESIDENTS WHO HAVE EASTERN EUROPEAN HERITAGE.

HUNGARIANS HAVE MARCH 15 AS THEIR INDEPENDENCE DAY WHILE THE GREEKS HAVE THEIR INDEPENDENCE DAY ON MARCH 25. GREAT UNION DAY IS DECEMBER 1 FOR THE ROMANIAN COMMUNITY. THE MACEDONIAN COMMUNITY CELEBRATES THEIR INDEPENDENCE DAY ON SEPTEMBER 8 AND CARPATHO-RUSYN DAY FOR NORTH AMERICA IS OCTOBER 26.

THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF HAVING A COMMISSION IS THAT WE HAVE A GREATER LIKELIHOOD THAT OHIO'S POPULATION IS RETAINED.

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AS THE WORD SPREADS HOW OHIO IS EASTERN EUROPEAN FRIENDLY WITH A COMMISSION, OHIO WOULD DO A BETTER JOB AT RECRUITING FAMILIES, AND YOUNG COLLEGE STUDENTS OR PROFESSIONALS WHO FEEL COMFORTABLE WITH A STATE THAT IS WELCOMING TO HAVE THEIR HERITAGE RECOGNIZED. IN GLOBALIZATION TERMS, OHIO CAN BE AN EXAMPLE TO ITS RESIDENTS AND THE WORLD ON HOW PEACEFULLY DIFFERENT GROUPS OF PEOPLE CAN UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER WHILE LIVING & WORKING TOGETHER.

AS IT IS SAID THAT THE SMALL BUSINESS IS THE BACKBONE OF AMERICA, THOUSANDS OF SMALL BUSINESSES HAVE BEEN STARTED THROUGHOUT OHIO BY OHIO'S EASTERN EUROPEAN RESIDENTS.

SOME NAMES OF CURRENT AND PAST OHIO RESIDENTS, WITH EASTERN EUROPEAN HERITAGE, WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE POSITIVE FINANCIAL AND PROSPEROUS ECONOMIC IMPACT OF OUR STATE, ARE:

FOOD INDUSTRY, (MICHAEL SYMON, WHO IS CARPATHO-RUSYN AND GREEK)

PROFESSIONAL ATHLETES (BERNIE KOSAR, A CARPATHO-RUSYN WHO WAS THE QUARTERBACK FOR THE CLEVELAND BROWNS PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM IN THE MID 1980'S AND TO EARLY 1990'S AND BIG Z OR ZYDRUNAS ILGAUSKAS, A LITHUANIAN WHO PLAYED FOR THE CLEVELAND CAVALIERS PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL TEAM IN THE 1990'S AND 2000'S)

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ENGINEER (UKRAINIAN JUDY RESNICK FROM AKRON, OHIO WHO DIED ON THE SPACE SHUTTLE CHALLENGER)

OHIO'S SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, PAULO DEMARIA, A HUNGARIAN

ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY (TORONTO, OHIO BORN ROBERT URICH AN AMERICAN FILM ACTOR, WHOSE HERITAGE WAS CARPATHO-RUSYN AND CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OHIO BORN PAUL NEWMAN WHO WAS SLOVAK)

LAWYERS (THE POPULAR QUOTE "I'LL MAKE THEM PAY" END OF QUOTE HAS MADE CROATIAN/SLOVAK PERSONAL INJURY LAWYER TIM MISNY FAMOUS IN RECENT YEARS WITH HIS CLEVER APPROACH TO ADVERTISING)

POLITICIANS (US SENATOR VOINOVICH WAS BOTH SLOVENIAN AND SERBIAN. ALSO THE FORMER MAYOR OF CLEVELAND IN THE 1970'S, MAYOR RALPH J. PERK WAS CZECH)

FAITH LEADERS (IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY ALONE, THERE ARE 6 CATHEDRALS LOCATED WITH 3 RESIDING BISHOPS) COLLECTIVELY 10% OF THESE RESIDENTS IN CUYAHOGA COUNTY ARE REPRESENTED BY THE HUNGARIAN, CARPATHO-RUSYN, SERBIAN, RUSSIAN AND UKRANIAN POPULATIONS.

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ALSO RESIDING IN CANTON, THERE IS A BISHOP WHO REPRESENTS THE ROMANIAN POPULATION WHILE MACEDONIANS HAVE A CATHEDRAL IN REYNOLDSBURG.

NORTHEAST OHIO MEDICAL UNIVERSITY'S VICE PRESIDENT, DIVISION OF ADVANCEMENT, DANIEL BLAIN, AN ASHKENASI JEW. HIS FATHER MICHAEL IS A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR AND IS STILL LIVING IN OHIO.

BANKER AND ENTREPRENEUR (BEN STEFANSKI, POLISH, WHO FOUNDED THIRD FEDERAL SAVINGS & LOAN WITH LOCATIONS IN THE CLEVELAND AND COLUMBUS AREA)

MUSICIANS (OHIO BASED EASTERN EUROPEAN FOLK BAND, HARMONIA) THERE MEMBERS ARE CARPATHO-RUSYN, ASHKENASI JEW, ROMANIAN, UKRAINIAN, HUNGARIAN, SLOVAK AND CROATIAN. THROUGH THEIR UNIQUE MUSIC, THEY DISPLAY THE VARIED TONES OF EASTERN EUROPEAN MELODIES TO AMERICA. A WHOLE NEW WORLD IS OPENED UP TO OTHERS WHO SEE AND HEAR HARMONIA PERFORM.

A CONTINUED INCREASE IN CULTURAL AWARENESS CAN RECUIT OTHERS TO CONSIDER MAKING OHIO THEIR HOME. A COMMISSION WOULD SHOW THE UNITED STATES THAT OHIO IS IN THE FOREFRONT OF OUR MULTI CULTURAL WORLD AND SET A TREND FOR OTHER STATES TO FOLLOW.

WE HAVE A UNIQUE GIFT TO OFFER OHIO, PLEASE OPEN THIS GIFT BY YOUR SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 261.

THANK YOU.

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Submitted by  
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