

SCRIPT OF THE ORAL TESTIMONY

Proponent of Bill 46

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Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Hello, my name is Helena Rempala. I am a clinical psychologist and an associate professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health at the Ohio State University. I am also an Officer on the Board of the Polish American Club of Columbus.

On the 12th of February 2020 I stood before you to give a testimony about the potential benefits that the Bill 46 (at that time we called it Bill 261) on the creation of the Eastern European Commission, could offer to the Polish-American Community of Ohio. Specifically, for this occasion, our Board surveyed the members of our Club and compiled their responses in a few paragraphs, adding a short history of Polish-Americans in Ohio, along with their various contributions, from the first wave emigrants of late 1800's who were brought here to replace the striking mill workers near Cleveland to the current OSU and Nationwide Children's Hospital professors of engineering, astronomy, mathematics, and microbiology and medicine. I am submitting the original testimony as a supplemental material for the Commissions and I thank you for the time you have already devoted to the issue.

Today I would like to highlight for You why Bill 46 has been supported by such a large and seemingly diverse national and ethnic groups. Not all Central Europeans are of Slavic ancestry

like Poles, Slovenians, Czech, or Slovaks. For example the Hungarians are Magyars, and the Romanians are just like you would expect, of Romanians ancestry. The Macedonians – well the Macedonians are what we call South Slavic. So why would we “band together” in Ohio? I believe the last Thursday 2/24/2022 provided if not the reason then the proof of the incredibly strong bond that exists between the nations from which the Eastern Europeans Ohioans originated and by extension, proof of the bond among the Ohioans of the EE origins themselves.

As of Sunday morning, according to the United Nations, some 368,000 Ukrainians [have fled from their Russian invaders](#) to their European neighbors — mainly to Poland, as well as to Hungary, Moldova, Slovakia and Romania. And the United Nations warns that millions may be displaced in the next few months, mostly children, women and seniors. Men 18-60 stay behind to fight.

Poland already received around 180 000 and counting Ukrainians. The Polish Government set up 9 receiving centers, collected hundreds of thousands of boxes of donations with food, clothing, medical supplies..... but it is the regular people, people like you and me, with no central command or leadership that drive up to the train and bus stations at the Poland’s eastern border, often from far away, pick up the individual families they have never met, one after another, and take them home. It is happening day and night as Polish Trains and buses offer the Ukrainians fare-free passes and the border patrols do not check their visas.

Unprecedented... Makes you pose, makes you think, makes you envy the bond.

So yes, the EE Commission will be the most ethnically and geopolitically diverse and yet, it will have a strong identity of unity celebrating the American “e pluribus unum”.

But why do we (you and I) need it in Ohio, you may ask? Historical context of Eastern European culture turns out to be very important as much for Ohio as for the rest of the country. With the increasing contingent of the US troops in Eastern Europe, troops also from Ohio, the education of the Eastern European cultures and traditions is more important than ever.

To make a long story short, let’s look at the last week’s world events. Putin’s propaganda paints Ukraine as a “no-country”. How are the citizens of Ohio reacting to this propaganda? And we know that in today’s world, the one who controls the message, controls the minds and souls of people.

So, would children of Ohio win in the cruel jeopardy game that the Russian president is forcing us all to play? Let’s find out:

Ukraine does not have its own language. True or False?

Ukraine did not exist as a formal country before the fall of the Soviet era? True or False?

Ukrainian government was not democratically elected. True or False?

The Ukrainian state was created by Russians. True or False?

Current Ukrainians government has Nazi’s sentiments. True or False?

Ukrainians are ethnically Russians? True or False

The official language of Ukraine is Russian. True or False?

Ukraine territory was half Polish. True or False?

If any member of the Senate present today hesitated in their answers, even for a second – then I suggest that the EE Commission should have been swiftly voted into existence 2 years ago. After all, its crucial role will be to educate, promote and enrich Ohioan culture with the gifts of Eastern-European history and culture. Let's win the better world together.

Thank You