

I support the establishment of the COMMISSION AND OFFICE OF EASTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS, for your consideration as SB 261.

As an active member of the Greater Cleveland Latvian Community (United Latvian Church, Greater Cleveland Latvian Association, Cleveland Latvian Concert Association Chair) I recognize the need for the establishment of such office. On a national level, I am a member of the American Latvian Association (ALA), the World Association of Free Latvians (PBLs), and serve on the board of the Latvian Cultural Organization, TILTS. As a former president of the Cleveland League of Women Voters (LWV), I am aware of the need for all people to participate in the US governmental process. In 1991 I presented a paper on Team Building at the International Latvian Science Congress in Riga Latvia. I am a regular correspondent to the internationally distributed Latvian newspaper LAIKS. (I have contributed close to 1,000 articles.)

The diversity of the Cleveland area is well represented in the unique Federation of the Cleveland Cultural Gardens (CCGF) where I served as the Executive Secretary and Vice President. In 2010 I initiated an effort to convert the long existing CCGF One World Day (since 1947) from a small event annually hosted by a singular nationality to a the entire Gardens event with all nationalities participating and attracting an audience close to 1,000 people. I chaired the OWD in 2010, 2011, and 2012.

For my efforts as the executive director of the non-profit organization, Living in Cleveland Center promoting residential choices in the City, the then Mayor of Cleveland, Michael R. White presented me a Key to the City.

I hasten to say that the countless members of other members of Eastern European ethnic background function as valuable citizens promoting an enriching the quality of life in their chosen communities. We are well suited to be liaisons with our countries of origin, thus enhancing potential trade opportunities. In 1990, February 6-14, I was a delegate with the then Governor, Richard F. Celeste, trade group to Moscow, and as a special recognition of my contacts, the Governor chose to charter a plane to Latvia where the delegates experienced a near royal reception.

We all function as individuals, but with an umbrella organization such as the proposed COMMISSION AND OFFICE OF EASTERN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS, many of our activities could be coordinated and our talents and experiences shared. We are in good positions to bolster and support our chosen country, the US, economically, culturally, and promoting good government.

I commend and salute the efforts of Ms. Laurel Tombazzi, and plead you to do same.

Sincerely,

Anda Sūna Cook, MS, Chair

Cleveland Latvian Concert Association