



Office of the Chicago City  
Clerk



R2012-167

Office of the City Clerk

City Council Document Tracking Sheet

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| <b>Meeting Date:</b>            | 2/15/2012   |
| <b>Sponsor(s):</b>              | Fioretti, Bob (2)<br>And Others, And Others (0)   |
| <b>Type:</b>                    | Resolution  |
| <b>Title:</b>                   | Expression of support for inclusion of Republic of Poland in<br>United States Visa Waiver Program |
| <b>Committee(s) Assignment:</b> | Committee on Human Relations  |

To Committee on Human Relations

**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE INCLUSION OF REPUBLIC OF POLAND IN THE UNITED STATES VISA WAIVER PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, The Visa Waiver Program is a federal government program that allows the nationals of certain countries to travel to the United States for tourism or business for up to 90 days without the need to obtain a visa; and

WHEREAS, Currently there are 36 countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program, including 30 European countries and Australia, Brunei, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore and South Korea; and

WHEREAS, To be admitted to the Visa Waiver Program, a country must meet stringent security requirements, such as enhanced law enforcement and security-related data sharing with the United States as well as a high caliber of counter-terrorism, border control, and document security standards; and

WHEREAS, In 2008 alone, more than 16 million visitors from Visa Waiver Program countries traveled to the United States, accounting for 65% of all overseas arrivals and spending more than \$51 billion on tourism and business-related expenses inside this country; and

WHEREAS, A February 7, 2012 Chicago Sun-Times editorial stated that " ... unlike residents of 36 other nations, visitors from Poland need a visa as well as a passport before they can come to the United States for up to 90 days. Most tourists coming to the United States live in countries that qualify for visa waivers, meaning tourists need only a passport, but much to the frustration of Poles, their nation doesn't qualify"; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of Poland unilaterally repealed visa requirements for United States citizens traveling to Poland on April 15, 1991, and both countries became formal allies through membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1999; and

WHEREAS, People of Polish heritage have significantly contributed to the growth, betterment and advancement of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, and of the United States, through their strong work ethic and noteworthy achievements; and

WHEREAS, The City of Chicago is home to nearly 180,000 Polish nationals and Polish Americans, making up the third largest European ancestry group in the City and an estimated 900,000 People of Polish heritage are living in the Chicago metropolitan area; and

WHEREAS, The City of Chicago is home to a thriving Polish community and numerous Polish American organizations including, among others, the Polish National Alliance, the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America, the Polish American Association, the Polish Highlanders Alliance of North America, the Polish Museum of America, and the Copernicus Foundation in Chicago. Chicago also plays host to such important ethnic civic events as the Polish Film Festival of America and the Taste of Polonia; and

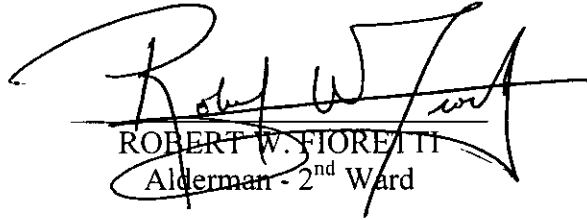
WHEREAS, The City of Chicago signed the first Sister Cities' agreement with Warsaw, the capital of The Republic of Poland, in 1960 which resulted in multiple exchanges benefiting both cities economically, socially and culturally; and

WHEREAS, The Republic of Poland has been a long and close ally of the United States, with General Thaddeus Kosciuszko and General Casimir Pulaski among the many who fought for American independence; and

WHEREAS, Congressman Quigley and Senator Kirk of Illinois have introduced bipartisan legislation in both chambers of Congress, HR 3855 and SB 2046, The Visa Waiver Program Enhanced Security and Reform Act, that would ultimately include Poland in the Visa Waiver Program; and

BE IT RESOLVED That we, the undersigned members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, gathered here this 15th Day of February, 2012 AD, do hereby express our unconditional support for visa waivers issued to Polish citizens in good standing and urge the State Department as well as the Department of Homeland Security to include Poland in the United States Visa Waiver Program with all dispatch.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That suitable copies of this resolution be prepared and presented to the United States Secretary of State, Department of Homeland Security, United States Congressional Delegation from Illinois, Polish Ambassador to the United States, the Polish Consul General in Chicago and the Polish American Congress.



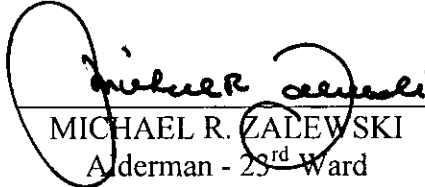
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ROBERT W. FIORETTI  
Alderman - 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward



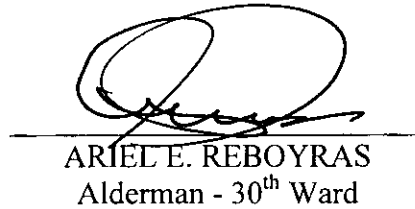
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RICARDO MUNOZ  
Alderman - 22<sup>nd</sup> Ward



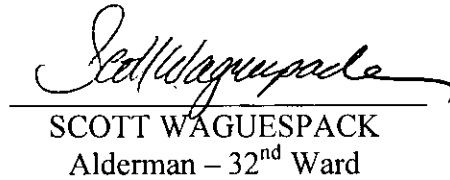
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MICHAEL R. ZALEWSKI  
Alderman - 23<sup>rd</sup> Ward



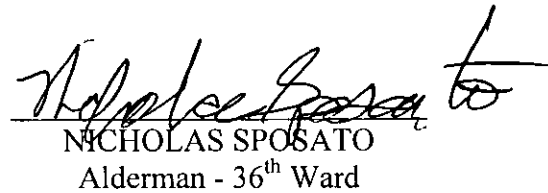
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ARIEL E. REBOYRAS  
Alderman - 30<sup>th</sup> Ward



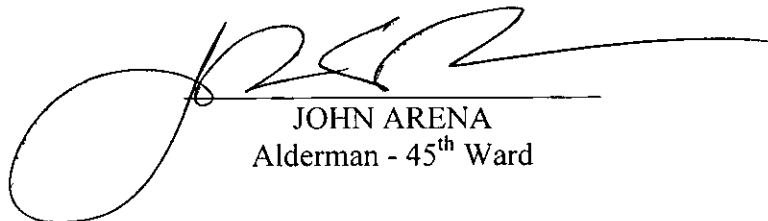
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SCOTT WAGUESPACK  
Alderman - 32<sup>nd</sup> Ward



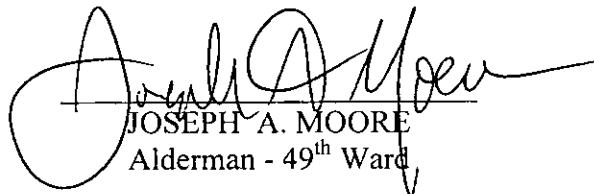
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NICHOLAS SPOSATO  
Alderman - 36<sup>th</sup> Ward



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JOHN ARENA  
Alderman - 45<sup>th</sup> Ward



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JOSEPH A. MOORE  
Alderman - 49<sup>th</sup> Ward