



Croatian American Association

April 17, 2018

House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Dear Chairman Rohrabacher and Ranking Member Meeks:

On behalf of the Croatian American Association (CAA), a non-profit, non-partisan membership organization of concerned Croatian Americans, we welcome the opportunity to submit our views to the Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia and Emerging Threats of the House Foreign Affairs Committee as part of your upcoming hearing to be held on Wednesday, April 18 in Washington entitled, "The Dayton Legacy and the Future of Bosnia and the Western Balkans."

The CAA has grave concerns about current electoral laws that discriminate against the Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). This discrimination will have very lasting political consequences after the 2018 general elections in BiH, if action is not taken immediately to deal with the necessary electoral reforms at issue.

To that end, we commend your hearing and urge Congress and the Trump Administration to take decisive leadership steps to re-engage in the Balkans, protect the interests of all constituent peoples and citizens in BiH, and insure the long-term political, economic, and social stability of BiH and the Balkans in general.

For too long, members of Congress and the White House have ignored the growing threat to the stability of BiH and the rights of the Croat people there who are increasingly subject to electoral discrimination that runs counter to every aspect of the Dayton Accords and the Constitutional Court of BiH.

There are millions of Americans of Croatian and other Southeast European ethnic origin who care deeply about the fate of their ancestral land after the terrible war that devastated the region 25 years ago. The U.S. has moved on to other world crises in recent years as BiH is being pulled apart by internal and external forces that threaten the future of the country and the stability of the entire region.

The CAA is currently working with its members to focus their attention on getting Congress and the Administration to step up to its historic responsibility to fulfill the promise of the Dayton Accords. The U.S. led the effort to bring peace in the Balkans a generation ago and the Croatian-American community has been forever thankful for that intervention. Now, however, Croatian-Americans and the CAA have seen the U.S. cede its authority and power to the European Union and Russia, and watched the slow regression away from the path towards democracy, rule of law, and protection of the Croat people in BiH.

America cannot sit idly by as the Dayton Accords are undermined and the Croat people there are left behind. We hope this hearing in Congress is the beginning of U.S. re-engagement to take the clear, strong, and decisive steps needed to implement the Dayton Accords and the judicial decisions of BiH courts

interpreting those Accords. We call on Congress and the Administration to admonish those who are subverting the rights of the Croatian constituent nation in BiH, undermining the rule of law and democracy, and opening up the chance of real conflict.

As you know, the Dayton Accords were the product of American resolve and leadership. Since that time, however, there has been a slow erosion of the principles of Dayton that if not corrected by the political forces in BiH, will open the door to possible disintegration and the intrusion of outside forces from Russia, Turkey, China, and other players more than happy to stir the pot of chaos to their advantage and against the interests of the U.S. and Europe.

We cannot let the historic achievements of the United States to end the war collapse due to neglect. Congress and the Trump Administration have both an obligation and opportunity to get ahead of the situation before it becomes a full-blown crisis.

CAA urges you to take whatever steps are necessary to elevate this issue, including encouraging the Secretary of State or Vice President to meet with leaders in BiH and emphasize the urgency of implementation of a new electoral law, and sending a Congressional delegation to similarly emphasize to BiH leaders the importance of a new electoral law.

We must work to find a common-sense solution that fulfills the promise of the Dayton Accords, meets the mandate of the Constitutional Court of BiH to implement a new electoral law, and preserves, protects, and defends all the constituent peoples in BiH.

Thank you for this opportunity to present the CAA's conviction that strong U.S. leadership is necessary at this precarious time in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Sincerely,

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