

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Representative Mike Quigley (D-IL) today introduced identical resolutions in both the Senate and House of Representatives expressing sympathy to the people of Poland over the death of President Lech Kaczynski and 95 others who were killed in a plane crash.

“I extend my deepest sympathies to the people of Poland for their profound loss,” Durbin said. “The people of Poland turn to their faith in times of trial and that faith has sustained them through many sad and tragic moments. We join all of America in prayers for the victims of this tragedy and our close friends, the people of Poland.”

“Our thoughts, prayers, and support are with all those mourning this overwhelming tragedy,” Quigley said. “From the families who lost loved ones in the plane crash to the nation of Poland to Chicago’s own shaken Polish-American community, this loss will be felt around the world for years to come. We will stand with our friends as they find the resilience to emerge stronger, as they have before, following this unthinkable event.”

President Kaczynski’s plane crashed on Saturday while traveling to Katyn, Russia for a memorial service marking the 70th anniversary of the killing of more than 20,000 Polish officers, prisoners, and intellectuals during the Second World War. Dozens of members of Parliament, Poland’s First Lady, Poland’s Deputy Foreign Minister, the Chiefs of Poland’s Army and Navy and the president of the national bank were also killed in the disaster.

Today’s resolutions express, “deepest sympathies to the people of Poland and the families of those who perished for their profound loss; strong and continued solidarity with the people of Poland; and unwavering support for the Polish government as it works to overcome the loss of many key public officials.”

[Full text of the resolution below]

Expressing sympathy for the people of Poland in the aftermath of the devastating plane crash that killed the country’s President, First Lady, and 94 other high-ranking government, military, and civic leaders on April 10, 2010.

Whereas the United States and Poland are close allies, with a shared bond of history, friendship, and international cooperation;

Whereas Polish immigrants were among the first Jamestown settlers and Casimir Pulaski immigrated to the United States to fight in the Revolutionary War;

Whereas more than nine million Americans of Polish descent now reside in the United States, bringing vitality to major metropolitan areas such as Chicago, Detroit, and New York City;

Whereas Polish-Americans have been leaders in all walks of American life;

Whereas the American people stood in support of the Solidarity movement as it fought against the oppression of the Polish communist government through peaceful means, eventually leading to Solidarity members being elected to office in open democratic elections held on June 4, 1989 – events that helped spark the movement to democracy throughout eastern Europe;

Whereas Poland joined NATO in 1999, joined the European Union in 2004, has contributed to US and NATO operations in Iraq and Afghanistan;

Whereas Poland has enjoyed a thriving and prosperous free market democracy since the end of the Cold War;

Whereas the Polish President Lech Kaczynski and 95 other people, including Poland's First Lady, the deputy foreign minister, dozens of members of Parliament, the chiefs of the army and navy, and the president of the national bank, were tragically killed in a plane crash in western Russia on April 10, 2010;

Whereas President Kaczynski and his colleagues were traveling to Katyn, Russia, for a

memorial service to mark the 70th anniversary of the Soviet secret police killing of more than 20,000 Polish officers, prisoners, and intellectuals who were captured after the Soviet Union invaded Poland in 1939;

Whereas for the first time a Russian head of state recently joined his Polish counterpart in Katyn for a ceremony remembering the killings;

Whereas Anna Walentynowicz, the former dock worker whose firing in 1980 sparked the Solidarity strike that ultimately overthrew the Polish communist government, was also killed in the crash;

Whereas Ryszard Kaczorowski, who served as Poland's final president in exile before the country's return to democracy, also perished;

Whereas Chicago suffered the loss of a respected artist when Wojciech Seweryn, whose father was killed in Katyn, died in the crash;

Whereas Mr. Seweryn recently completed a memorial to the victims of Katyn at St. Adalbert Cemetery in Niles, Illinois, which Polish President Kaczynski planned to visit in May;

Whereas President Barack Obama said, the "loss is devastating to Poland, to the United States, and to the world. President Kaczynski was a distinguished statesman who played a key role in the Solidarity movement, and he was widely admired in the United States as a leader dedicated to advancing freedom and human dignity";

Whereas Former Solidarity leader and ex-president Lech Walesa said, "Today, we lost part of our intellectual elite in a plane crash. It will take a long time until the wounds of our democracy are healed"; and

Whereas thousands of Poles gathered in the center of Warsaw and elsewhere around the world

on Saturday to mourn those killed in the crash and affirm their continued solidarity with the people of Poland; Resolved, that the Senate –

1. expresses its deepest sympathies to the people of Poland and the families of those who perished for their profound loss;
2. expresses strong and continued solidarity with the people of Poland and Polish-American communities in the United States; and

expresses unwavering support for the Polish government as it works to address the loss of many key public officials.