

**Public Diplomacy, Democracy, and Global Leadership:
An approach for the 21st century
December 5, 2019
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Longworth House Office Building
Room 1334**

Remarks by
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Ranking Member, Helsinki Commission

This year, we celebrate thirty years since the historic democratic transitions in Central Europe, the unification of Germany, the liberation of the Baltic states, and the opportunity to build a “Europe Whole and Free.” The years since have not be squandered and, across the continent, a generation has benefited from peace, security, prosperity and democracy. Still others in Europe look to join the institutions that have secured these benefits.

And as the United States and Europe have faced new challenges, we worked together to develop new tools. In the early 2000s, I and fellow Commissioners worked with OSCE parliamentarians to ensure that the OSCE would address a then spike in anti-Semitism. A decade later we had the tools to address the problem from hate crimes laws and statistics to law enforcement training,

In spite of these achievements, we are faced today with rising threats to democracy; our own country and European countries turn away those in need of humanitarian assistance at our borders; and a resurgence of anti-Semitism, racism, and other prejudices across our nations. Last year we witnessed the worst anti-Semitic attack in this country at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh followed by the targeted killings of Latin Americans in El Paso, Texas this year.

Earlier this year I convened OSCE parliamentarians at an event in Luxembourg entitled, “Lessons from the past, Leadership for the Future” where we spoke about the responsibility of leaders in safeguarding our democracies by speaking out and using their legislative strength against those who would seek to divide our societies. From that conversation it was clear that more needs to be done to engage leaders across the political spectrum and emerging leaders in the preservation of our democracies, especially amongst our allies and places where it was thought the west had won. Public diplomacy has long been a tool to achieve these goals through people to people exchanges that allow for an understanding of our differing cultures, shared values, and relationship building that stands the test of station and time.

It is time we reinvest in these strategies in the west with an eye towards what we have gotten right and wrong over the years. And, also how these programs can be strengthened and refined to encourage the necessary leaders on both sides of the Atlantic that will preserve our democratic futures.

Finally, as we consider the importance of 1989, the fall of the wall, the Velvet Revolution, I would urge that we also consider this: walls were infamously designed to keep people in, but also kept Americans, and other foreigners out. For 30 years now, Americans have been able to study, work, live, and travel in previously closed countries. People-to-people ties, called for in the Helsinki Final Act, have brought our countries closer together.

I look forward to hearing from our expert witnesses today on what gaps they are seeing in transatlantic leadership, how those gaps might be addressed to meet the challenges we are seeing today, and ultimately how public diplomacy initiatives can be strengthened to cultivate leaders that will sustain our democracies for generations to come. Thank you.