

Message on the Observance of Polish American Heritage Month

October 8, 1996

Warm greetings to everyone observing Polish American Heritage Month.

Many Americans proudly trace their roots to Poland, a land whose rich and colorful past is rivaled only by the bright promise of its future. This month, as we celebrate the many contributions that Americans of Polish heritage have made to our nation's history and culture, we also reaffirm the strong and friendly ties between the United States and Poland.

Before America became a nation, Poles came to these shores in search of liberty and opportunity, and their descendants have remained at the forefront of efforts to keep America free, strong, and prosperous. This year we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of the great Polish hero Tadeusz Kosciuszko, who helped secure the independence of our fledgling republic during the Revolutionary War. Since that time, millions of other men and women of Polish descent have invested their hopes in America's bold experiment in self-government and, inspired by faith in God and a devotion to democratic ideals, have worked hard to ensure its success.

The deep cultural and familial ties between the peoples of the United States and Poland have been strengthened by our shared values and aspirations. For generations, Poles have demonstrated the same reverence for individual rights and dignity that infuses our own system of government. The United States supports Poland's democratic transition and her people's efforts to establish a pluralistic society and a free market economy. Poland and the United States are building a new security for the twenty-first century, working together to prepare for NATO's enlargement in an undivided Europe.

As we observe Polish American Heritage Month, I join all Americans in thanking our fellow citizens of Polish descent for their countless contributions to the strength and quality of our national life. Best wishes to all for a memorable celebration.

Bill Clinton

Remarks on Signing the Federal Aviation Reauthorization Act of 1996

October 9, 1996

Thank you, Doug Smith, for your very moving remarks, for your recognition of the contributions of others, and for your own constant, brave efforts to help this day come to pass. And I thank all the family members who are here for your efforts to go beyond your own personal suffering to make something positive happen for our country in the future. Thank you, Madam Attorney General, for your strong support and your leadership in this regard; to OMB Director Raines; Congressman Duncan, thank you, sir, for your leadership, for the fine work you did; to the FAA Administrator, David Hinson, who is here. I'd like to say a special word of thanks to Admiral Edward Kristensen and Coast Guard Commander Ken Burgess, who supervised the recovery efforts for TWA 800. And I hope they will thank the Navy divers and the men and women of the Coast Guard who have worked so long and hard off Long Island. To Deputy Secretary Mort Downey of Transportation; Vice Chairman of the NTSB, Bob Francis. To all of you, thank you for being here.

Today I am pleased to sign the Federal Aviation Administration's authorization bill that will address the concerns Doug Smith expressed so movingly. It will improve the security of air travel. It will carry forward our fight against terrorism.

Last summer I met with the families of the victims of TWA Flight 800, the cause of which we are still investigating. They told me, as Mr. Smith and others have said, that there should be a single place in the Federal Government, a specific office that has the responsibility and the capability to assist them in the wake of a tragedy. This bill gives the National Transportation Safety Board that task. The NTSB will be the sole authoritative agency so that families will know exactly where to go and who will speak for the Government when they have lost a loved one. The measure builds upon Secretary Peña's efforts to improve passenger manifests on international flights, a priority for families of victims.