

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 10, 2016

The Honorable Beata Szydło  
Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland  
00-583 Warsaw  
Al. Ujazdowskie 1/3

Dear Prime Minister Szydło:


We represent a bipartisan group of Senators that are friends of Poland and have close ties to Polish-American communities in the United States. We are writing to express concern about recent actions taken by the Polish Government that threaten the independence of state media and the country's highest court and undermine Poland's role as a democratic model for other countries in the region still going through difficult transitions. We urge your government to recommit to the core principles of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU), including the respect for democracy, human rights, and rule of law that has made Poland such a strong and vibrant member of the Community of Democracies and a stalwart ally of the United States in the heart of Central Europe.

Last month, the European Commission for the first time used its powers under the Rule of Law Framework to open a preliminary assessment into two recently passed pieces of Polish legislation to determine whether they breach the EU's "fundamental values". We understand that the first law would curb the ability of the Constitutional Court to use its powers to strike down laws that it determines to be unconstitutional. We understand that the second law would threaten the independence of state broadcasters and press freedom in the country. These laws could serve to diminish democratic norms in Poland, including the rule of law and independence of the judiciary. An erosion of democracy in Poland would undermine liberal institutions that have successfully expanded prosperity, peace, stability, and tolerance within Europe at a time when these institutions are greatly needed.

Since the fall of communism, Poland's successful integration into Western institutions has produced an economically prosperous and militarily strong example for the region's post-communist states to follow. Poland's accession into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) more than 16 years ago has strengthened the alliance's eastern flank and created a bulwark against further Russian incursions into Eastern Europe. U.S.-Polish relations have flourished due to membership in shared institutions, commitment to liberal ideals, and strong diaspora ties between our two countries.

We are strong advocates for our robust bilateral relationship. It is in that spirit in which we appeal to you -- we urge you to recommit to the shared democratic values enshrined in the Helsinki Accords and EU charter as a means towards ensuring stability, prosperity and peace in Europe.

Sincerely,




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BENJAMIN L. CARDIN  
United States Senator



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JOHN MCCAIN  
United States Senator



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RICHARD J. DURBIN  
United States Senator