

# Nancy Johnson



Fifth District, Connecticut

[www.house.gov/nancyjohnson](http://www.house.gov/nancyjohnson)

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## Lech Walesa Supports Johnson Bill

*Measure Allows Polish Citizens to Travel to U.S. Without a Visa*

### Leaders Meet in Congresswoman's Washington Office

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Former Polish President Lech Walesa met with Congresswoman Nancy Johnson today and pledged his strong support for her bill adding Poland to the Visa Waiver Program.

“As a matter of fairness, Polish citizens should be able to travel to the United States without needing to obtain a visa. Polish citizens should have the right to come and go,” Johnson said. “I’m pleased President Walesa is supporting my legislation to add Poland to the Visa Waiver Program. I look forward to working with him to achieve fairness for Polish-Americans and Polish citizens,” Johnson added.

President Lech Walesa, who led the newly-democratic Poland from 1990 to 1995, traveled to Washington Wednesday to meet with Johnson and rally other Members of Congress to support her legislation. Walesa emerged as the leader of the Polish anti-Communist opposition during the Cold War as head of the Solidarity labor movement. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983.

“We have the right position,” Walesa said to Johnson through an interpreter. “The United States and Poland cooperated through their history, but today a visa separates the two. We need to solve the visa question.”

“Few people in the world have made as much difference to history as you,” Johnson said to Walesa. “It took a number of years but your nation made progress. Now we have to win this issue. Polish visitors to the U.S. should not need a visa.”

Under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), the U.S. government allow citizens of 27 countries to visit the United States without obtaining a visa for up to a 90-day period. These countries include Slovenia, Brunei, France, Germany, Australia, Singapore, and Japan.

Johnson’s legislation, H.R. 3956, adds Poland to the Visa Waiver Program, allowing Polish citizens to travel to the United States with a passport only. Poland unilaterally repealed its visa requirement for American visitors in 1991.

## **Lech Walesa Supports Johnson Bill**

Nine million Americans of Polish ancestry live in the United States. Approximately 300,000 people of Polish ancestry live in Connecticut, including 17,000 Polish speakers. New Britain, Connecticut is home to a thriving Polish-American community.

“Nancy has been our champion,” said Andre Blaszczyński, President of the Polish American Foundation of Connecticut, a non-profit organization that provides cultural and social services. “It is a great boost for us that President Walesa is supporting Nancy’s bill to add Poland to the Visa Waiver Program.”

Poland has taken strong steps toward freedom and openness in the last 14 years, joining the NATO alliance in 1999 and the European Union in May. Poland has been a staunch ally of the United States in the War on Terror.

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