(JBANC) - The Senate plans in April to deliberate and vote on S. 1572, the Freedom Consolidation Act. As the Chronicle goes to press, the exact date of the vote is not yet known.

Introduced in the fall in both the House and Senate, the Freedom Consolidation Act endorses a strong bipartisan vision of NATO enlargement. This is made even more crucial following 9/11 and the subsequent U.S.-led war against terrorism. Now, more than ever, the U.S. needs a stronger, more stable and dedicated coalition of transatlantic partners. S. 1572 also authorizes military funding for seven of the NATO aspirants, including Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Adopted in the House by an overwhelming 85% margin, the Senate measure passed committee muster unanimously, was held up by Sen. John Warner (R-VA) and later debated in the Armed Services Committee.

Closing In On Project Europe


They included Sven Mikser of Estonia, Girts Valdis Kristovskis of Latvia and Linas Linkevicius of Lithuania.

Attended by standing-room-only special invitees, the conference (Continued on page 10)
Chairman’s Corner by Vello Ederma

Time is running short. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are closing in on invitations to NATO membership. A NATO ministerial will take place in Reykjavik in May. Much of that will probably be devoted to relationship with Russia.

All indications are that the Balts will be invited. Conditions related to the attainment of democratic values, force preparedness and compatibility with NATO may be placed on each prior to final determination. All ten candidates, the so-called “Vilnius-10,” have been warned not to create any problems for themselves prior to November.

Even after acceptance by NATO, which may be sometime in 2003, the focus will shift from NATO and the governments to the member parliaments, which must ratify changes in the 1949 Washington NATO Treaty. That’s where the U.S. Senate will play a major role. It is likely that the allies will await final action by the Senate before weighing in themselves. Two-thirds of the U.S. Senators, sixty-seven, must vote “aye” before the invitees can breathe easy. A strong backing for a positive vote by the White House will be needed to push the divided Senate toward a completion of the process. At that point, the European parliaments will probably go along. The final results may not be known until sometime in 2004.

JBANC believes that the inclusion of the three Baltic countries in NATO will strengthen the vision of the last three American Presidents for a “Europe whole and free.”

We at JBANC strongly endorse President Bush’s Warsaw statement that “all of Europe’s new democracies, from the Baltic to the Black Sea and all that lie between, should have the same chance for security and freedom.” The Administration has said that “the U. S. is determined to complete ‘Project Europe,’” a trans-Atlantic community of free nations finally at peace. We pledge our help for that noble cause.

American Ethnic Organizations of V-10 Countries Meet in Washington.

Over 100 leaders of American Central and East European ethnic organizations met on March 16 in Washington to address grassroots cooperation in support of NATO enlargement. Arrangements for the conference were facilitated by Mr. Martin Butora, Ambassador of Slovakia, and Przemyslaw Grudzinski, Ambassador of Poland. JBANC Board members and staff participated. The gathering heard presentations by the Ambassadors of the various NATO aspirant countries. Together they comprise a grouping known as the Vilnius 10 (V-10). The name stems from the joint declaration signed in May 2000 at the
I appreciate the opportunity to share with you my thoughts after three months in Riga where I serve as the fourth American Ambassador to Latvia since 1991. This is an historic time for all the Baltic nations – 11 years after re-establishing independence, Latvia and its neighbors north and south are thriving democracies, with fast-growing economies, on the verge of full integration into NATO and the European Union. This embassy’s principal goal is to help Latvia be the best possible candidate it can be.

One of Latvia’s challenges as a NATO candidate is military reform and development. All recent assessments show that, especially given the country’s need to rebuild its military almost from scratch, the Berzīns government is on target. During February visits by both the NATO Secretary-General and by a State-Pentagon team from Washington, the Latvians promised to maintain the two percent of GDP defense spending level (a figure better than many current NATO members achieve!) and to continue modernization of the military forces.

There is, however, a much bigger question. While it is firstly a military alliance, NATO nations also are bound together by shared values. Perhaps the most important question the member-states of NATO will ask when assessing candidates is “Are they just like us in their respect for democracy, human rights, free market economies and rule of law?”

Since arriving November 27, I have focused on three important values: full participation of ethnic minorities in Latvian society, the fight against corruption, and the willingness to both objectively evaluate and teach the painful facts of Latvia’s World War II history. There is good news to report on all fronts, as well as more work to be done.

For a democracy to thrive, it must value the participation of all members of society – regardless of ethnicity. Latvia’s government has taken important steps to promote this participation – including making it easier for residents to naturalize. The international community has commended Latvia for these efforts. However, we Americans know full well from our own experience that social integration is an endless challenge. In particular, we and other Western governments believe Latvia must amend its election law, which currently requires candidates for public office to speak especially fluent Latvian. As the situation currently stands, the election law divides Latvian citizens into two classes – those who can vote, and those who can both vote and run for office. That conflicts with recognized international human rights norms. However, President Vike-Freiberga and Prime Minister Berzīns assure me that they will find other measures to strengthen and preserve use of the Latvian language, while at the same time amending the election law to comply with international norms.

The rule of law is essential to any democracy. At the request of Vice President Cheney, we are helping the Government of Latvia to fight corruption and update the old, Soviet era criminal procedures code. Legislation currently before the Saeima will form an anti-corruption bureau. This is good, but I am urging – in public and private – that this new organization be independent of political interference, have a broad mandate to go after corruption wherever it occurs, and have sufficient resources and leadership to accomplish its mission.

As any democracy looks to its future, it must also objectively assess its past. Latvia is making good progress on this. The Historical Commission is engaged in research and international academic conferences. The Latvian Association of Teachers of History is developing materi-

(Continued on page 13)
Washington, DC (JBANC) - Sen. George Allen, junior Republican Senator from Virginia, announced on February 14 that he will join the Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus, a working group with an interest in strong U.S.-Baltic relations.

Senator Allen made the statement at a reception celebrating the anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Lithuania. He has been one of the staunchest supporters of the NATO enlargement process during his first year in office. In April 2001, he was one of 17 Senators who signed a letter asking President Bush to lead a strong enlargement process. President Bush came out strongly in favor of continued enlargement during a June 2001 speech in Warsaw and the Administration has favored plans for a robust enlargement since then.

Sen. Allen is also a co-sponsor of the Freedom Consolidation Act (S. 1572), a bill endorsing the future vision of NATO enlargement and authorizing increased military funding for many of the current NATO aspirant countries, including Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. A vote in the Senate on the bill is pending, after a hold is lifted by Sen. John Warner (R-VA), who has asked for a closer look at the issue.

With Sen. Allen, the Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus will have nine members: founder and co-chair Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL), co-chair Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR), Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA), Sen. George Voinovich (R-OH), Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Sen. Peter Fitzgerald (R-IL) and Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD). There are nearly seventy members in the House Baltic Caucus, co-chaired by Congressmen John Shimkus (R-IL) and Dennis (Continued on page 18)
JOINT STATEMENT OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF ETHNIC COMMUNITIES
ON THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

WASHINGTON, D.C., MARCH 16, 2002

1. We, the Representatives of the American ethnic communities of the Albanian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Polish, Romanian, Slovak and Slovenian descent, have gathered in Washington, D.C. to endorse the vision of a Europe whole and free as presented by President George W. Bush on June 15, 2001 and by former President William J. Clinton on October 22, 1996.

2. We believe that NATO is the backbone of the transatlantic community and has been an effective bulwark in the defense of freedom, democracy and human rights. We further believe that a strong involvement of the United States in Europe serves the vital interest of the United States.

3. We thank the United States House of Representatives for overwhelmingly passing the Freedom Consolidation Act of 2001 and we urge its expeditious passage by the United States Senate.

4. We believe that the accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to NATO has contributed to transatlantic security and strengthened and expanded the zone of peace, stability, democracy and cooperation in Europe.

5. We share President Bush's belief that “All of Europe's new democracies, from the Baltic to the Black Sea and all that lie between, should have the same chance for security and freedom --and the same chance to join the institutions of Europe -- as Europe's old democracies have.” Furthermore, we believe that the almost 55 million people who live in Europe's aspirant nations should contribute to and share in the benefits of the family of European nations.

6. We commend Europe's new democracies for their progress in solidifying democracy, establishing market economies and building strong and just civil societies. We believe that the invitation to join NATO will be a major achievement in the struggle for freedom. In this regard, we honor all who have suffered in this cause and we thank the United States for its abiding support.

7. We recognize the significant progress that has been made by Europe's new democracies in their preparation to shoulder the responsibilities that membership in NATO requires.

8. We commend Europe's new democracies for their solidarity with the American people after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and for their willingness to act as de facto allies of the United States and NATO. We recognize the contributions of Europe's new democracies for opening their air and land facilities to the United States and NATO and for sharing their resources in promoting global security and in the fight against terrorism.

9. We applaud Europe's new democracies for their commitment to cooperation which was initiated in Vilnius, Lithuania in May, 2000.

10. We urge Europe's new democracies to accelerate needed reforms to enable their invitations to join NATO at the Prague Summit. We also understand that this continued commitment to shared values is an essential component of such membership.

11. We express our thanks to the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland for their support of the Vilnius process, to Denmark and Norway for their work in the security of the Baltics and to Greece and Turkey for their support of their closest neighbor nations.

12. We commit ourselves to support and promote the fulfillment of the vision of a Europe whole and free and respectfully urge the President of the United States and the United States Senate to support invitations to all aspirant nations who have demonstrated their preparedness for admission to NATO.
On February 12, JBANC conducted its first ever live webcast using audio technology. The hour long webcast featured interviews with the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian ambassadors resident in Washington. They mainly spoke about their countries’ progress in seeking integration into NATO and the European Union.

Ambassador Sven Jürgenson of Estonia spoke from Washington, D.C., while Ambassador Aivars Ronis, accompanying Latvia’s President Vaira Veike Freiberga to the Olympic games, called in from Salt Lake City. Ambassador Vygaudas Usackas of Lithuania also participated via long distance from the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado where he was to deliver a lecture. JBANC Chairman, Algis Rimas, moderated the program.

Ambassador Usackas spoke of the recent visit to the United States by Lithuania’s President Valdas Adamkus. He met President Bush at the White House in mid-January, and was highly impressed with President Bush’s commitment to NATO enlargement. The theme was echoed in a succession of other high level appointments. President Adamkus came away with renewed confidence regarding prospects of the Baltic countries gaining admission into NATO this year.

Following the successful Adamkus visit to the United States, President Vike-Freiberga of Latvia arrived to attend the World Economic Forum in New York and to continue on to Washington, said Ambassador Ronis. She met with Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell and other high level officials and members of Congress. After a sidetrip to Houston, Latvia’s president wound up her visit by cheering the Latvian team at the Salt Lake City Olympics.

 Ambassador Jürgensen spoke of the recent changes in the Estonian

Ambassadors Sven Jürgenson (Estonia), Aivis Ronis (Latvia) and Vygaudas Usackas (Lithuania).

(Continued on page 18)
LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY
-- (House of Representatives - February 14, 2002)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. SHIMKUS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, as an American of Lithuanian descent, I always come down to the floor around this time of year to commemorate Lithuanian Independence Day.

The 16th of February is the most important national holiday for Lithuanians. Eighty-four years ago Lithuania declared their independence from Germany. At this time its government held two main principles, restore statehood and the right to national self-determination.

Even after 50 plus years of Soviet occupation, these principles still hold true for Lithuania today. As soon as they established their independence in 1991, they have been working towards their goal towards NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

I am pleased that Lithuania has shown as much tenacity and discipline in its membership action plan program as it did towards achieving freedom. All indications show it will be a significant contributor towards the Alliance.

Since 1994, over 1,000 Lithuania troops have served in NATO-led missions in the Balkans. Lithuania has expressed strong political and diplomatic support for the U.S. antiterrorist campaign, and it is ready to contribute its military and medical unit as part of the Czech hospital to the operation in Afghanistan and a military security unit within the Danish contingent to Kyrgyzstan as its practical contribution to the "Enduring Peace" operation.

Moreover, Lithuania's current experience and positive relations with its neighbor, Russia, are poised to only get better once Lithuania receives an invitation to join NATO.

I congratulate the people of Lithuania on their Independence Day for their hard work and perseverance, and I extend these greetings to all Americans of Lithuanian descent.

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(JBANC) - In early March, JBANC continued its series of informational meetings on the topic of NATO Enlargement, this time in Florida. Meetings were held in Orlando and also in St. Petersburg. Karl Altau, JBANC’s Managing Director spoke on the urgency of getting Senate support for the Freedom Consolidation Act (S. 1572), which is expected to go up for a vote in April. This is only a step on the road to NATO membership for Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the other leading aspirant countries of the V-10 group. S. 1572 may prove to be an indicator of how Senators may vote when the actual NATO Ratification vote comes up. This is not expected to occur until later in 2003.

Before then, maximum support is needed for S 1572. The bill endorses a bipartisan support for the NATO enlargement process and also authorizes Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funding for the Baltics, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria.

These seven countries are the leading candidates for admission during the next round of enlargement. Along with Albania, Macedonia and Croatia, these countries make up the Vilnius-10 (V-10) group, which has been meeting regularly since May 2000.

Florida has traditionally warmed up to the Baltics. Many Baltic-Americans have made that state their home.

The largest concentrations of each of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian communities are said to live in the Tampa Bay area.

Congressman C. W. “Bill” Young, chairman of the powerful House Appropriations Committee, represents that area and has been a longtime friend of the Baltics. He worked hard to restore FMF funding to the Baltics in 2000, after an amendment to cut these funds was passed. In addition, Chairman Young saw to it that his committee provided an additional $5 million for regional assistance to the area.

Another friend in Florida is Congressman Porter Goss, who represents the southwest coast of the state. Goss, like Young, has consistently voted for legislation supporting the Baltics. Goss is the Chairman of the House Select Intelligence committee and a member of the House Baltic Caucus. Congressman Goss recently announced that he would seek an 8th term of office.

It is especially crucial to contact Florida’s Senators to ask them to lend their support for NATO enlargement.

Florida’s senior Senator is Bob Graham, Chairman of that body’s Select Intelligence Committee. Freshman Bill Nelson is a member of the Foreign Relations Committee which, in December, sent the Freedom Consolidation Act to the Senate floor by unanimous consent. A few days later, Sen. John Warner (R-VA) placed a hold on the legislation, stalling its passage.

During the meeting in St. Petersburg, Altau was joined by, among others, ALA President Janis Kukainis, Janis Eichmanis of the Embassy of Latvia and also Girts Valdis Kristovskis, the Latvian Defense Minister. All gave a different perspective of the enlargement process. Kristovskis was in the U.S. to participate in meetings in Washington, DC with his Estonian and Lithuanian counterparts.

Revised JBANC NATO Enlargement Handbooks were distributed to participants at all meetings. Members of the audience were encouraged to seek a state resolution supporting Baltic NATO aspirations. On March 6, the Michigan House passed a bill, which had also received the approval of that state’s Senate in 2001. A similar measure is expected to be introduced in Delaware in April and similar efforts are underway in a handful of other states. Iowa, Illinois and Minnesota legislatures have also passed measures giving support for these aspirations.

Participants were also encouraged to seek contact with media outlets and to ask their Members of Congress to join the Baltic Caucus.

JBANC is planning visits to Texas and other southern states in the near future.

-by Karl Altau-
American Ethnic Organizations of V-10 Countries Meet in Washington

(Continued from page 2)

Lithuanian capital. It expressed the mutual commitment of Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia to cooperate in their mutual wish to become NATO members. Croatia later joined the group.

A key point in the Vilnius declaration was the following: "While each country should be considered on its own merits, we believe that the integration of each democracy will be a success for us all and the integration of all our countries will be a success for Europe and NATO". The American organizations participating at the meeting subscribe to this position and support the admission into NATO of all aspiring European democracies in the Vilnius 10 group who would meet established NATO standards.

A key speaker was Senator George Voinovich of Ohio who spoke of his support for NATO enlargement and the passage of the Freedom Support Act that would endorse enlargement. Other speakers included Bruce Jackson, President of the U. S. Committee on NATO, Walter Andrusyszyn, Director for Central Europe at the NSC, Cameron Munter, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw and Jan Nowak, formerly of the Radio Free Europe and long-time activist on behalf of restoring freedom and democracy to Poland and the other countries of Central and East Europe.

The conference also heard presentations by several leaders of American ethnic organizations, including the Washington based Central and East European Coalition (CEEC). After discussions, the meeting adopted a resolution, co-drafted by former JBANC President, and currently the Lithuanian American Council President, Saulius Kuprys. The text of the resolution appears on page 5 of this issue.

The conference provided an important opportunity to share information on the issue of NATO enlargement - an issue of great importance to all those attending. The meeting also served to renew the mutual commitment among the various participating U.S. organizations to cooperate and press for enlargement in 2002. To this end, JBANC is already working with 18 other national organizations that come under the CEEC umbrella. They represent some 22 million Americans of Central and East European heritage.

- Algis Rimas -
Closing In On Project Europe

(Continued from page 1)

consisted of a panel of the Defense Ministers, former CIA Director James Woolsey and Washington Post reporter Jackson Diehl.

The main thread running through the Defense Ministers’ remarks was Baltic preparedness for NATO membership and current and increasing military cooperation among them. All said they were ready for NATO.

The ministers often echoed each other’s remarks, saying that Baltic membership will be driven by values and not by fear. They suggested that Russia will adapt to Baltics in NATO very quickly.

Former CIA Director Woolsey was strongly optimistic about the Baltics getting invitations to join NATO during the Prague Summit this November.

Washington Post reporter Diehl, while not denying the possibility of Baltic membership, said that the process is not yet over, especially because NATO needs to define its own future.

- Vello Ederma-
Baltic Leaders Visit Washington, D.C. to Advocate for NATO Enlargement

The winter of 2002 witnessed a blitz of high-level Baltic visitors to the nation’s capital. First to come was Lithuania’s President Valdas Adamkus. He was continuing the official visit that began last September and had been cut short by the tragic events of September 11. JBANC co-hosted a reception for President Adamkus on the evening of September 10 at the Hart Senate office building. However, the festive mood of that September evening ended abruptly the following morning when terrorists attacked the United States. Suddenly, the country had to cope with new and urgent priorities and President Adamkus left without completing his visit.

This time, JBANC and the U.S. Baltic Foundation planned to welcome Lithuania’s president on January 22 with an appropriate hospitality. However, the event had to be cancelled when a last minute schedule change resulted in advancing the trip by a week.

President Adamkus did have a very successful visit. Its highlight was a White House meeting with President Bush. Among the topics discussed was NATO enlargement. After that session, President Adamkus emerged with renewed confidence regarding prospects for the admission of the Baltic countries into NATO. Additional details about President Adamkus’ visit may be found in the Chronicle article about the webcast interview with the three Baltic ambassadors.

JBANC, the U.S. Baltic Foundation and the Baltic American Freedom League (BAFL), organized another presidential reception on February 5 at the Capitol. This time, it was a luncheon in honor of President Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia. Among the 150 guests were Senators Daniel Inouye, Richard Durbin and Paul Sarbanes. Congressmen Tim Holden, Doug Bereuter, Porter Goss, Dennis Kucinich, Tom Lantos with his wife, Annette, Connie

(Continued on page 13)
The U.S. and the Second Round of NATO Enlargement
Conference at Columbia University, February 21-22, 2002

By Ints Rupners
(former ALA and JBANC President)

On February 21-22, Columbia University and the U.S. Army War College held a conference in New York on “The U.S. and the Second Round of NATO Enlargement”. Some 50 participants from the U.S. military, academic world and various embassies participated. General support of both NATO enlargement and for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as invitees was expressed at the event.

Some of the more common prejudices against Baltic membership were addressed in the following ways:

1. **Russia’a objections** – the new (post 9/11) role of Russia as a member of the NATO consultative process eliminates most Russian objections. Russia seems to be adjusting to both enlargement and the membership of the Baltics. Worry over NATO enlargement to Russia’s border is a canard. Norway, Turkey (with the USSR) and the U.S. (Alaska) have been there from NATO’s beginnings.

2. **The Baltics are indefensible** – So are Norway, Greece, Iceland etc.

Most NATO nations were indefensible in 1949 and remain so today with the exception of the U.S. and the UK.

3. **The Baltics will be consumers of security rather than providers** – So are all members of NATO with the exception of the U.S., UK, France and maybe Germany. The strong protect the weak under U.S. nuclear cover.

4. **NATO will become fragmented and many-tiered in capability** – This has always been the case. Iceland and Luxembourg are non-starters militarily, as are Belgium, Netherlands, Greece, Portugal and Denmark. Italy, Spain and Norway are the next tier. France is and has always been a question mark.

5. **NATO will become more political and less military with enlargement** - This process has been going on since 1990. NATO has always been more political than military. Its only military trump was U.S. nuclear capability and the threat of its use to stop Soviet attack.

The European view is not as positive, according to Quentin Peel of the Financial Times. He feels Europeans are less enthusiastic about enlargement because NATO will become less of a military entity. There is confusion about NATO’s role and mission. Germany is for enlargement to the East as a new buffer. The UK looks to retain a North Atlantic component, which enlargement would dilute. France seeks to diminish the U.S. role. Peel also expressed worries about undue Russian influence, especially with regards to Latvia.

Former Estonian Foreign Minister Toomas Ilves pointed out that NATO enlargement is a political decision. Military capability of the candidates hasn’t been a major criterion.

Enlargement to the Baltics will eliminate a “grey” zone in Europe and foreclose Russian adventurism resulting in increased stability.

Stephen Blank (U.S. Army War College), said Russia wants a more political NATO. Russia would seek to supervise NATO activity where Russian interests are involved. Also, it does not want outright membership, which would mean outside supervision of its military.

The consensus was that, for better or worse, expansion will occur and the Baltics will be part of the process.
als for teaching in schools honestly about both the German and Soviet occupations, to include the Holocaust. The prosecutors’ office has gained valuable experience in investigating war crimes. Latvia must continue to analyze its sometimes painful history, but I am pleased to notice that, as disparate groups reflect on their separate tragedies, they are respectful of the sacrifices of others.

After three short months in this country, I find myself encouraged by Latvian optimism, charmed by the artistry that graces even the most modest gesture here, and deeply impressed by the talent and energy I encounter every day. People know that America is one of Latvia’s best friends, and we know the reverse it true too. After a warm welcome to my job in Riga, I am more optimistic than ever about this country’s future. We will have a busy spring and summer, and I predict that Latvia will be much in the news. Your support and encouragement will help Latvia’s leaders and citizens keep their forward-looking approach to problems and their march to an even better future.

Baltic Leaders Visit Washington, D.C. to Advocate for NATO Enlargement

Morella and John Shimkus attended. At the luncheon, President Freiberga presented Rep. Shimkus with the U.S.-Baltic Public Leadership Award. Rep. Tom and Annette Lantos presented to the family of the late Rep. Gerald Solomon the U.S.-Baltic Lifetime Achievement Award.

During her trip to the United States, President Freiberga met with President Bush, Vice President Cheney and other high Administration officials. She also participated at the World Economic Forum in New York City, met business leaders and the city mayor at Houston, Texas, and cheered the Latvian Olympic team at Salt Lake City.

On March 13 JBANC and the Aspen Institute (Berlin branch) co-sponsored a round table discussion in the Senate Hart Building on the topic entitled, "Are the Baltics ready for NATO and is NATO Ready for the Baltics?". The Atlantic Council Association in Vilnius, Lithuania assisted with arrangements. The panelists included the Defense Ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, former CIA Director John Woolsey and Washington Post columnist, Jackson Diehl. The answer to the question was yes.

Over 100 invited guests, including many Congressional staffers, attended the discussion moderated by Dr. Jeff Gedmin of Aspen. Minister Sven Mikser of Estonia pointed out that Estonia contributes more troops per capita to NATO peacekeeping missions than any NATO country. Latvia’s Defense Minister Girts Valdis Kristovskis informed that Latvian troops are on the way to Tajikistan to assist in the campaign against terrorism. Minister Linas Linkevicius of Lithuania told of how Baltic country cooperation on NATO inspired projects is spreading.
The top priority of the Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc., representing more than a million Americans of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian descent, is to help Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to be invited to become members of the NATO alliance. NATO membership of the Baltic countries is essential to the security, stability and peace of the Baltic region, as it is in the vital security interest of the United States.

America’s continued presence in Europe through NATO must continue. The security of the United States is indivisible from the security of Europe, especially in the era of the worldwide fight against the scourge of terrorism. Therefore, a viable trans-Atlantic community of democratic states and a Europe that is unified and free, without dividing lines, must not exclude Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Enlargement of NATO will strengthen the vision of the last three American presidents for a Europe whole and free. JBANC strongly endorses President Bush’s Warsaw statement of June 2001 that all of Europe’s new democracies, from the Baltic to the Black Sea and all that lie between, should have the same chance for security and freedom. If the integrity of the enlargement process is to be preserved, non-NATO countries must not be permitted to exercise veto power over the admission of any aspirant country into the alliance.

The three Baltic countries have created militaries that now cooperate fully with each other and enhance the security of the Baltic area. They are now producers of security that has seen Baltic troops aiding NATO peacekeeping operations. The three Baltic democracies have become prosperous market economies, committed to stability, security and Western democratic values in a manner consistent with the North Atlantic Charter. Russia will eventually see NATO enlargement as beneficial to its own security interests that will allow the internal development of a free, democratic society cooperating with the West, discarding its centuries of imperial inclinations. NATO membership for the Baltic countries will actually make Russia’s Western border more stable and secure.

It is also natural that a new trans-Atlantic world will require a thoughtful examination of NATO’s future. However, its future role will be incomplete, impractical and even dangerous without the participation in the deliberations by new members, such as the Baltic countries.

Twentieth-century history has shown that uncertainties and divisions in Europe can be dangerously destabilizing. They have drawn the United States into two World Wars and contributed to the Cold War. Moreover, countries excluded from a collective security system create power vacuums that destabilize security, which inherently will be dangerous to the national interests of the U.S. JBANC warns against any secret agreements that evoke memories of Yalta. NATO has reiterated that history and geography have no bearing on NATO membership.

It is in America’s political and economic interest to be firmly committed to the goal of promoting a Europe that is undivided, free and secure. It can only be achieved through United States involvement in Europe and collective security through an enlarged NATO. The integration of the three Baltic countries into NATO must continue at full speed, with invitations at Prague in November 2002.
BALTIC LEADERS VISIT WASHINGTON TO EXPLAIN CONTRIBUTION OF THE BALTIC COUNTRIES TO NATO

(Continued from page 13) democratic values to the countries of the former Soviet Union. All three defense minister said their countries are meeting their NATO membership action plans and that each country either is or soon will be spending at least 2 percent of its GNP on defense.

Both Mr. Woolsey and Mr. Diehl indicated that the chances of the three Baltic countries to be invited into NATO in 2002 are excellent. Following the round table event, the Aspen Institute hosted a dinner for the panelists and their guests. Among the participants were the presidents of the constituent organizations of JBANC: Mati Kõiva of the Estonian American National Council, Inc., Janis Kukainis of the American Latvian Association, Inc., and Saulius Kuprys of the Lithuanian American Council, Inc.

During their stay in Washington, the Baltic Defense Ministers met with Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of State Armitage, NSC Deputy Director Haley and other officials. They also spoke on Baltic security issues at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington. The message delivered by the Baltic officials was one of mutual cooperation and progress in contributing to the mission of NATO.

New Estonian Foreign Minister Kristiina Ojuland was also in Washington, DC to meet with high-level officials. Secretary of State Colin Powell told Ojuland on March 18 that President Bush supported a larger rather than smaller enlargement of NATO. She also met with Senators Richard Durbin, Richard Lugar, Gordon Smith, John McCain and Jesse Helms, all of whom were presented with orders of the Cross of Terra Mariana for their long-standing support of U.S.-Estonian relations. Senate Minority Leader Trent Lott also praised her country’s decision to raise defense expenditure to 2 percent of GDP.

(from RFE/RL Baltic States Report, March 28, 2002)

During the past few months, JBANC and other Baltic American organizations saw an increase in grassroots interest and media support for the Baltics to be invited into NATO. For example, people from all parts of the United States – not necessarily Baltic ethnics – have been writing and calling their Senators in support of the passage of the Freedom Consolidation Act. This legislation passed the House by an overwhelming (372-46) margin last Fall and awaits action by the Senate. JBANC has been a staunch backer of all efforts to have Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania admitted into NATO.

- Algis Rimas -
### House Baltic Caucus

Co-chairs:
**Rep. John SHIMKUS (R-IL)**
**Rep. Dennis KUCINICH (D-OH)**

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68 Representatives Total (as of March 5, 2002)

**Party Breakdown:**
- 29 Republicans
- 39 Democrats

**Top Five States (45 Members):**
- California 11
- Michigan 11
- New York 8
- Pennsylvania 8
- Illinois 7

[www.jbanc.org](http://www.jbanc.org)
Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus

Sen. Richard Durbin (D - IL)
332 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1304
Phone: (202) 224-2152
Fax: (202) 228-0400
Email: dick@durbin.senate.gov

Sen. Gordon Smith (R - OR)
404 Senate Russell Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3704
Phone: (202) 224-3753
Fax: (202) 228-3997
Email: oregon@smith.senate.gov

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D - CT)
706 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0703
Phone: (202) 224-4041
Fax: (202) 224-9750
Email: senator_lieberman@lieberman.senate.gov

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D - CA)
331 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0504
Phone: (202) 224-3841
Fax: (202) 228-3954
Email: senator@feinstein.senate.gov

Sen. Charles Grassley (R - IA)
S135 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-1501
Phone: (202) 224-3744
Fax: (202) 224-6020
Email: chuck_grassley@grassley.senate.gov

Sen. George Voinovich (R - OH)
317 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-3353
Fax: (202) 228-1382
Email: senator_voinovich@voinovich.senate.gov

Sen. Peter Fitzgerald (R - IL)
555 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-2854
Fax: (202) 228-1372
Email: senator_fitzgerald@fitzgerald.senate.gov

Sen. George Allen (R - VA)
204 Senate Russell Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: 202-224-4024
Fax: 202-224-5432
E-mail: Senator_allen@allen.senate.gov

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D - MI)
702 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0703
Phone: 202-224-4822
Fax: 202-228-0325
E-mail: senator@stabenow.senate.gov

Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D - MD)
709 Senate Hart Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0703
Phone: 202-224-4654
Fax: 202-224-8858
E-mail: senator@mikulski.senate.gov

*As of April 1, 2002
Sen. George Allen (R-VA) Joins Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus

(Continued from page 4)

Kucinich (D-OH). Lithuanian Ambassador Vygaudas Usackas remarked following the occasion at the Lithuanian Embassy that he welcomes Sen. Allen to the Caucus, and that besides strengthening personal ties between the Baltics and the Senator himself, Sen. Allen’s decision will also help to “strengthen interest in the Baltic states” in Congress.

As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Allen will be closely involved in the Senate NATO enlargement ratification debate. Preliminary debate regarding NATO’s mission, including enlargement, is already beginning.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), became the tenth member of the Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus in March. While in the House, Stabenow was also a member of the Baltic Caucus. She has a dedicated track record of favoring positive legislation towards the Baltics and has, through her years in Washington, and as a MI state legislator, worked closely with the MI Baltic-American communities.

JBANC Webcast features Baltic Ambassadors in Washington

(Continued from page 6)

government, emphasizing its democratic continuity and adherence to the policy of joining NATO. He mentioned plans for Estonian high level visits to the United States later this year but cautioned that too many high level visits from the Baltics could bring about a sense of "Baltic fatigue" in Washington.

All three ambassadors pointed out that NATO membership for their countries would stabilize the region and set an example to countries in transition. By sharing their experience, the Baltic countries could assist the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union in developing their emerging democracies and free market economies. The ambassadors described the progress made by each of their countries in securing democracy, human rights and the rule of law. They also spoke about the advances in their military preparedness and compliance with NATO standards as agreed to in their respective NATO membership action plans. Each country either is or shortly will be spending at least 2 percent of its GNP on defense. In short, the Baltics are ready and willing to take on the responsibilities of NATO membership and to bear its burdens.

Over 150 listeners logged on to listen and ask questions.

- Algis Rimas -
At press time, JBANC is currently planning another live audio webcast with a guest who will bring a new perspective to the questions—and some answers—surrounding NATO enlargement. We hope to schedule this for mid-April.

Please check JBANC’s webpage for updates or feel free to contact us.

We would be happy to add you to our e-mail subscribers list. You will receive occasional information and updates from JBANC electronically. To subscribe, please e-mail us at:

jbanc@jbanc.org

JBANC’s webpage is:
http://jbanc.org

For more Information on NATO enlargement go to:

For more information on NATO visit:
expandNATO.org
Baltic Americans Mourn Death of Oregonian Uldis Seja

Uldis Seja, longtime Board member of American Latvian Association and great supporter of the Baltic cause, died in Portland, Oregon on March 13 at age 66. Mr. Seja was serving as the Treasurer for ALA and the World Federation of Free Latvians at the time of his death.

Mr. Seja was born March 9, 1936, in Valmiera, Latvia. He immigrated to the United States in 1950 and moved to Milwaukie (OR) in 1970. He was a retired industrial engineer for Portland General Electric. He married Rita Grislis in 1970. Survivors include his wife; daughter, Astrida Seja Kaugars; and son, Talis.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the restoration of the Latvian Freedom Monument in Riga. Please make checks payable to the American Latvian Association with a notation "BPAF - U. Seja Memorial." Donations can be sent to the American Latvian Association, 400 Hurley Avenue, Rockville, MD 20850-3121.

Change of Powers - Estonians Take Over JBANC

(JBANC) - On March 14, 2002, the Board of Directors of JBANC met to discuss strategy for the coming year.

At the meeting, the annual rotation of JBANC’s presidency also took place. For the 2002-2003 term, the Estonian American National Council, Inc. assumes the role. EANC President Mati Kõiva becomes JBANC President for the coming year. Likewise, Vello Ederma of Springfield, VA is Chairman. This is his third time in that capacity.

Meetings of the Board of Directors are held twice a year. The Board is comprised of the Presidents of the three constituent organizations of JBANC, along with two Washington, DC representatives from each organization - totaling nine members.

The Local Washington Area Board, with two members from each of the three organizations, meets monthly under the direction of the Chairman. Managing Director Karl Alttau sets up and attends the meetings, along with Program Assistant Simonas Girdzijauskas.