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LRB097 20572 GRL 66196 r

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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The United States government launched the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) in 1986 to make it easier for tourists and business travelers from friendly nations to visit without a visa, as long as their homeland met stringent security and law-enforcement standards; and

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WHEREAS, Poland is currently one of the few European nations to be excluded from the VWP, despite its nearly century-long diplomatic relationship with the United States; and

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WHEREAS, The Polish government repealed its visa requirement for U.S. citizens traveling to Poland in 1991; and

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WHEREAS, Poland has been one of the staunchest U.S. allies during the military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, where 2,500 Polish soldiers are currently deployed; at least 24 Polish troops have been killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan; and

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WHEREAS, In his December 2010 meeting with Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski, President Barack Obama said he would make Poland's admission into the VWP a "priority", and pledged to complete that process expeditiously; and

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1 WHEREAS, Expansion of the VWP would bring increased revenue
2 to the travel industry, at a time when America's economy needs
3 it the most; in 2008, the countries in the VWP generated more
4 than 16 million visits to the U.S., accounting for 65% of all
5 overseas arrivals that year; VWP travelers spent more than \$51
6 billion in the U.S., which generated an estimated 512,000 jobs,
7 \$13 billion in payroll and \$7.8 billion in taxes for the U.S.
8 economy; and

9 WHEREAS, The Secure Travel and Counterterrorism
10 Partnership Program Act of 2011, currently under consideration
11 in Congress, aims to update and modernize VWP requirements,
12 ultimately making Poland and other U.S. allies eligible to
13 participate in VWP; the Act would also enhance national
14 security by encouraging information sharing between the United
15 States and member countries; therefore, be it

16 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-SEVENTH GENERAL
17 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we urge Congress to
18 pass the Secure Travel and Counterterrorism Partnership
19 Program Act of 2011 in an effort to improve our international
20 diplomatic relationships, create jobs, stimulate the economy,
21 and strengthen national security; and be it further

22 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be

1 delivered to the Speaker and Minority Leader of the United
2 States House of Representatives, the Majority and Minority
3 Leaders of the United States Senate, and the members of the
4 Illinois congressional delegation.