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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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

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

WHEREAS, The Polish government repealed its visa requirement for U.S. citizens traveling to Poland in 1991; and

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

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

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; according to the USTA, in 2010, more than 17  
4 million visitors to the U.S. were from VWP countries,  
5 comprising 65% of all visitors; while visiting, they spent  
6 nearly \$61 billion, supporting 433,000 American jobs and  
7 generating \$9 billion in tax revenues; and

8           WHEREAS, The Secure Travel and Counterterrorism  
9 Partnership Program Act of 2013, currently under consideration  
10 in Congress, aims to update and modernize VWP requirements,  
11 ultimately making Poland and other U.S. allies eligible to  
12 participate in VWP; the Act would also enhance national  
13 security by encouraging information sharing between the United  
14 States and member countries; therefore, be it

15           RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
16 NINETY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
17 we urge Congress to pass the Secure Travel and Counterterrorism  
18 Partnership Program Act of 2013 in an effort to improve our  
19 international diplomatic relationships, create jobs, stimulate  
20 the economy, and strengthen national security; and be it  
21 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.