



ASSOCIATION OF
CROATIAN AMERICAN
PROFESSIONALS

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HRVATSKO-AMERIČKIH
STRUČNJAKA

Association of Croatian American Professionals
International Relations Committee
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Ladera Ranch, California 92694

TO: The President of the Republic of Croatia, Ms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović
The Prime Minister of the Republic of Croatia, Mr. Andrej Plenković
CC: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia

February 17th, 2018.

Dear Ms. Grabar-Kitarović, Dear Mr. Plenković,

We are writing this letter because we are concerned about how the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reflects on our lives, careers, and business opportunities in the United States and on our relations with our ancestral homeland, Croatia.

For many years now our members have been witnessing efforts to get closer and richer and more engaged relations between the Croatian diaspora in the US, the Republic of Croatia and Croatian businesses and institutions. It has been recognized many times that Americans of Croatian descent are a critical and impactful yet underutilized resource in US/Croatian relations. As you probably know, many individuals in the US have opened important doors for Croatia in the US, have provided irreplaceable contacts between businesses on both sides of the Atlantic, and are permanently engaged in furthering these relations. We had many valuable interactions with professionals from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the Government and Presidency of Croatia.

At the same time, however, we have more than once witnessed a lack of vision, strategic thinking, and in extreme cases a lack of professionalism. We are also witness to a situation where countries comparable or even smaller in size and geopolitical importance have outpaced

Croatia on many bi-lateral fronts; from mundane but important treaties such as a tax treaty (Slovenia) to one on one business agreements such as the memorandum of understanding between the Serbian government and US technology giant Cisco. Or the example of Bosnia and Herzegovina which has been designated a beneficiary country under the United States Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program. Meanwhile, Croatian diplomats are not present at important bilateral US/Croatian meetings or completely miss to address and counteract public events staged by competitors of the Republic of Croatia. We have this sinking feeling that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs instead of being ahead of the ball, and actively working on important issues for both communities are rather sitting passively and only reacting once the damage has been done.

We believe there are ways to to start an effort in fixing this situation. And to that end we propose the following as points of concern by the US diaspora. This approach might as well serve as a model for other Croatian communities around the world. Let's start working towards these principles:

- Mutual respect, we believe that diaspora organizations should have a voice in the diplomatic representatives pre-vetting process. The key staff should be professionals with a track record of interacting with the diaspora community and the host country. Without the backing of the diaspora community it will be hard to accomplish goals that make a difference.
- Aligned views on open issues, should focus the limited resources and energy to the most impactful projects. Subsequently, these issues should have clear owners whose personal agendas, egos or political affiliations are set aside.
- Professionalism and a distinguished track record of achieving key goals should be a minimum requirement for staff in key positions. These people have significant responsibilities and should be able to display leadership and professionalism in representing Croats and the interests of the Republic of Croatia.

In light of,

- past performance,
- of missed, but also of future opportunities,
- the lack of initiative, and the recent UN exhibit setback,
- and of a current nomination being floated for the key post in New York,

We respectfully ask you to seriously reconsider such a nomination. In addition, we also ask you to take this simple platform as the basis for building a future which will finally correct the gaps due to years of neglect. We have a new generation of Croats ready to take the helm. Let's provide them with opportunities and give them responsibilities and resources to make them successful.

We are looking forward to this new journey which is long overdue. And we hope that the Ministry of Foreign affairs will shift its priorities accordingly and focus on the mission, which is to: stay ahead in shaping Croatia's future, working closely with partners and engaging proactively detractors.

Respectfully,

International Relations Committee,
Association of Croatian American Professionals.

