

“Polin,” which some translate as “here you shall rest.” But while everyone in Poland learns about the Holocaust, many people know little about the lives of the Jews before they met their death in the concentration camps of Nazi occupiers. This rich history spanning a thousand years must be reclaimed. Indeed, understanding the travesty of the Holocaust requires a full understanding of what was destroyed.

Accordingly, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews will commemorate the 3 million Polish Jews who died in World War II. It will also celebrate the nearly one thousand years of proud Jewish culture in Poland.

In addition, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews will enhance understanding of Jewish history and cultural roots at a time when anti-Semitism is growing throughout Europe. As a former President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and now as Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I am heartened by the educational role this museum can play in fulfilling the goals that the OSCE participating States have undertaken in the field of combating anti-Semitism.

This museum has been some years in coming. In 1996, Yeshayahu Weinberg, a founding director of Tel Aviv’s Diaspora Museum and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, created an international team of experts with the goal of establishing a museum to display and preserve artifacts which showcase the extensive culture of the Jewish people in Poland. In 1997, the Warsaw City Council donated 13,000 square meters of land for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews inside the old Jewish Quarter and opposite the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Memorial. In 2005, an

international architectural competition selected a Finnish firm to design the building housing the Museum of the History of Polish Jews. The astounding architecture remarkably represents the parting of the Red Sea through ingenious use of mortar, steel and space.

Approximately 500,000 visitors are anticipated to visit the museum each year. Visitors will take a virtual journey through a world where Jews experienced not only persecution and poverty but perseverance and success. If all goes as planned, the museum will open in 2009 with initial costs funded primarily by the governments of Poland and Germany, and through private donations from Jewish communities around the world.

Madam Speaker, it is estimated that eighty percent of all Jews and over 9 million Americans trace some of their ancestry to the Polish Jewish community. This museum has the potential to touch the lives of our own citizens in deeply personal ways. I look forward to visiting it myself.

CONGRATULATIONS TO LARRY
HIMMELSBACH

HON. VERNON J. EHLERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 14, 2007

Mr. EHLERS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Larry Himmelsbach on the occasion of his retirement as Deputy Director of the Office of Emergency Planning, Preparedness, and Operations. Larry is a tireless “public servant who has dedicated his professional

life to preserving the security of our nation’s government and the American public.

After graduating from Holy Cross in 1974 with a degree in Political Science, Larry began his career at the FBI, located in what is now the Ford House Office Building. He served there for 1 year in the fingerprint division before joining the newly created Atomic Energy Commission in 1975, where he served as a security specialist and held a myriad of positions in the Division of Security. The dedication he exhibited early in his professional life to maintaining our national security would be a common thread throughout his career.

In 1985, Larry joined the U.S. Department of Energy, where he held several senior positions in emergency operations and threat assessment. In 2002, he accepted the position of Deputy Director of the Office of Emergency Planning, Preparedness, and Operations within the House. In his role with OEPPPO, which was created as a result of the attack on 9/11 and the anthrax incident in October 2001, Larry has been an integral part of carrying out the agency’s mission of creating a comprehensive emergency management plan for the House.

Madam Speaker, whether protecting the public from the threat of nuclear terrorism, or ensuring the continuity of our constitutional form of government, Mr. Himmelsbach has always answered the call to serve.

On behalf of myself, my colleagues in this chamber, and the American public, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Larry Himmelsbach for his 33 years of public service, and for ensuring the safety and security of our great Nation.