



## ADVOCACY FOR UKRAINE ISSUES ADVANCES ON CAPITOL HILL... PART 1

Nearly four dozen Ukrainian Americans from New Jersey, District of Columbia, New York, Illinois, Virginia, Connecticut, Ohio, Florida, Pennsylvania, Colorado, North Carolina, Washington state, and Michigan convened in Washington, DC on March 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> for the first-in-a-series of “Ukrainian Days” advocacy events to be held in 2017. The Ukrainian Americans were also joined by community leaders from the Central and East European Coalition, the Syrian American community, and students from the Philadelphia area Ukrainian Saturday School civics group.

The event began with a briefing session with presentations by former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine John Herbst and former U.S. ambassador to Georgia William Courtney, who provided an overview of the current political climate between the U.S. and Russia, as well as an overview of Ukraine’s reform efforts. Briefing papers were also distributed that included an analysis of ‘How Congress Can Assist Ukraine’ with briefing notes on legislation that has been introduced in Congress since the beginning of the year, including: Russian Sanctions Review Act; STAND for Ukraine Act; Crimea Annexation Non-Recognition Act; and two resolutions calling for an end to the violence in Ukraine and expressing unwavering commitment of the United States to NATO.

“Ukrainian Day” participants met with more than 50 offices in the House of Representatives and Senate, among them: Sen. Nelson (D-FL); Sen. Blumenthal (D-CT); Sen. Murphy (D-CT); Sen. Stabenow (D-MI); Sen. Peters (D-MI); Rep. Gutierrez (D-IL); Rep. Meehan (R-PA); Rep. Turner (R-OH); Sen. Warner (D-VA); Rep. Tonko (D-NY); Rep. Stefanik (R-NY); Rep. Pascrell (D-NJ); Sen. Gillibrand (D-NY); Sen. Menendez (D-NJ); Rep. Maloney (D-NY); Rep. Frelinghuysen (R-NJ); Sen. Toomey (D-PA); Sen. Brown (D-OH); Rep. Tenney (R-NY); Sen. Kaine (D-VA); Rep. Dingell (D-MI); Sen. Casey (D-PA); Rep. Lowey (D-NY); Rep. Smith (D-WA); Rep. Ryan (D-OH); Rep. Larson (D-CT); Rep. Boyle (D-PA); Rep. Cartwright (D-PA); Rep. Jones (R-NC); Rep. Beyer (D-VA); Rep. Holmes Norton (D-DC); Rep. Renacci (R-OH); Sen. Barrasso (R-WY); Sen. Tillis (R-NC); Rep. DeLauro (D-CT); Sen. Booker (D-NJ); Sen. Burr (R-NC); Rep. Fitzpatrick (R-PA); Rep. Levin (D-MI); Sen. Murray (D-WA); Sen. Schumer (D-NY); Rep. Chabot (R-OH); Rep. Costello (R-PA); and, Sen. Duckworth (D-IL). Most Members joined their staffers to acquaint themselves with the community’s concerns regarding the current situation in Ukraine and acts of increased Russian aggression. The students from the Philadelphia Saturday School also “popped in” to various congressional offices during their trek on Capitol Hill to advocate for greater U.S.-Ukraine relations.



L to R: A Futey, Amb. Chaly, Rep. Kaptur, E. Czolij, M. Sawkiw; NJ participants with Sen. Menendez; NY participants with Rep. Tonko

March 8<sup>th</sup> concluded with an evening reception in the Capitol Visitor Center, during which Michael Sawkiw, UCCA Executive VP and Director of UNIS introduced Rep. Andy Harris, MD (R-MD), the newest co-chair of the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus. Sawkiw also presented the “Friend of UNIS” award to two individuals for their continued support of Ukraine - CUC co-chair Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) - for her leadership at the helm of the Congressional Ukrainian Caucus and numerous initiatives in support of Ukraine; and, Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA) - for his sponsorship of the Crimean Annexation Non-Recognition Act in the U.S. House of Representatives. Ukraine’s ambassador to the U.S., H.E. Valeriy Chalyi expressed his gratitude to the U.S. Congress for its support of Ukraine throughout Ukraine’s 25 years of independence. Immediately following, UCCA President Andrew Futey and Ukrainian World Congress President Eugene Czolij provided words of thanks and encouragement to the community participants of the “Ukrainian Days” advocacy event, and especially to Members of Congress for hearing our community’s pleas for assistance to Ukraine.

Former UCCA President Tamara Olexy bestowed the UCCA’s highest accolade, the “Shevchenko Freedom Award” to Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) who was unable to attend XXII Congress of Ukrainians held in Hartford last year. The senator thanked the UCCA and the Connecticut community for their activism and pledged that he, along with his colleagues, will continue to stand with Ukraine in its time of need.

## MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY MARKED AT THE UN

On Friday, March 10, the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations sponsored the 3rd observation of Ukrainian Mother Language Day at United Nations Headquarters. This year's program, entitled "A Celebration of Women's Voices" came together after working together with volunteers from the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, the Ukrainian National Women's League of America, the Volya Institute for Contemporary Law and Society, the International Council of Women as well as UN representatives of the Ukrainian World Congress and the World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations. Ambassador Volodymyr Yelchenko, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations, was joined on the dais by Catherine Pollard, Under-Secretary-General for the United Nations General Assembly.

The program was moderated by Bogena Dergalo, UN Youth Representative for WFUWO. The historian, university professor and social activist Dr. Martha Bohachevsky Chomiak delivered the keynote address. Other highlights included a clip from the forthcoming feature-length drama *Julia Blue* (2017), written and directed by Roxy Toporowych. Shot entirely on location in Ukraine, this love story focuses on a bright and idealistic student activist from Ukraine's West and a wounded soldier returning from the war in the East.

Recitations of poetry and prose will included the writings of Lesia Ukrainka, as well as the Crimean Tatars poems of Ayshe Ake and Sabriye Erejepova. Violin accompaniment during the readings was performed by members of New York Virtuoso Orchestra of New York. The program closed with performances by the all-girls Soloveiky Chorus of Philadelphia, and special performance on Ukraine's National Instrument, the bandura, by Halyna Bodnar and Julia Stupen.



Performers of the all-girls "Soloveiky" Chorus of Philadelphia.

## ...ADVOCACY FOR UKRAINE [PART 2]

On March 9<sup>th</sup> Ukrainian Days participants divided into two groups to attend a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing entitled: "Undermining Democratic Institutions and Splintering NATO: Russian Disinformation Aims" and a briefing with Ukraine-desk officials at the U.S. Department of State. Both occasions were an opportunity for the community to acquaint themselves with U.S. foreign policy objectives in the legislative and executive branches.



Participants of "Ukrainian Days" at the Ukrainian Embassy

The two-day advocacy event concluded with a briefing session at the Embassy of Ukraine. Amb. Chaliy greeted the "Ukrainian Days" participants and thanked them for their advocacy for greater assistance to Ukraine, and for not forgetting about the illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula. Please visit [www.ucca.org](http://www.ucca.org) for more details.

## UCCA MEETS WITH UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, UCCA had an opportunity to meet with MP Hanna Hopko, Chairperson of the Verkhovna Rada's Foreign Affairs Committee and Ukraine's Deputy Foreign Minister Serhiy Kyslytsya.



L to R: A. Dobriansky, S. Kyslytsya, H. Hopko, T. Olexy, W. Zaryckyj  
The almost two hour meeting was a fruitful exchange of ideas how we can more closely cooperate to assist Ukraine during these troubling times.