

## UCCA CELEBRATES LESIA UKRAINKA

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, Ukrainians around the world will celebrate the life of Larysa Kosach-Kvitka, better known by her literary pseudonym – Lesya Ukrainka. Born on this day 150 years ago, Lesya became the foremost woman writer in Ukrainian literature, a leading figure in its modernist movement, and an activist for the advancement of political, civil and women's rights. For over a century, her contribution to Ukraine's literature and identity has inspired millions and will continue to do so for years to come.

Born into a talented family, Lesya Ukrainka had a number of influential people to mentor her from a young age. Her mother, Olha Drahomanova-Kosach, was a writer and publicist better known by her literary pseudonym Olena Pchilka, and her uncle, Mykhaylo Drahomaniv, was a well-known Ukrainian scientist, historian and public figure. Lesya's early poetry was inspired by Ukraine's greatest literary figures – Taras Shevchenko and Ivan Franko. Through the inspiration of these great historical figures, her love for her nation and the written word flourished.

By the time she was eight, she had written her first poem titled 'Nadiia' (Hope), and her first published poems 'Konvaliia' (Lily of the Valley) and 'Safo' (Sappho) appeared in 'Zoria', the Lviv journal in 1884. In 1888, Lesya and her brother organized a literary circle called 'Pleyada' (The Pleiades), which was founded to promote the development of Ukrainian literature and for the purpose of translating foreign classics into the Ukrainian language. Lesya had a strong knowledge of many languages including Russian, Polish, Bulgarian, Greek, Latin, French, Italian, German and English.

She actively opposed Russian autocracy and promoted a free and independent Ukraine. Lesya also penned epic poems, dramas, prose, literary criticism, and a number of sociopolitical essays. She was best known for her plays: 'Boyarynya' (1914; The Noblewoman) - a psychological tragedy centered upon a Ukrainian family living in the 17th century, and 'Lisova pisnya' (1912; The Forest Song), whose characters include mythological beings from Ukrainian folklore.

At a young age Lesya was diagnosed with bone tuberculosis, a debilitating disease which forced her to travel often to places with dry climates where she could receive treatment. Many of these treatments were torturous for the young woman, as she often had to remain stationary for long periods of time. It was through her poetry that she was able to experience the freedom that her physical body could not enjoy. Her words were her wings that allowed her to soar even in her darkest moments. From her poem 'Kontra Spem Spero' (Hope Despite all odds):

*Yes, I will laugh despite my tears, I'll sing out songs amidst my misfortunes,*

*I'll have hope despite all odds, I will live! Away, you sorrowful thoughts!*

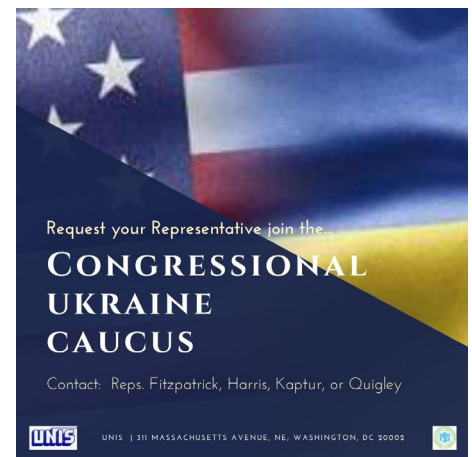
Lesya's last years were spent convalescing in Egypt and the Caucasus, before she passed away on August 1, 1913, in Georgia. Ukraine's most prominent female poet is buried at Baikove Cemetery in Kyiv.

UCCA calls upon the Ukrainian American community to celebrate the life of the foremost female writer in Ukraine's literature – Lesya Ukrainka – whose body of work not only presents universal themes but also reflects Ukraine's struggle for greater freedom.

## HELP US GROW THE CONGRESSIONAL UKRAINE CAUCUS

On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the co-chairs of the bipartisan Congressional Ukraine Caucus (CUC) circulated a 'Dear Colleague' letter to all 435 members of the House of Representatives requesting membership in the Caucus.

In part, the 'Dear Colleague' letter stated: "Since its formation in 1997, the [CUC] has served as a proud advocate for liberty and democracy in Ukraine... As a Member of the Caucus, Members will strengthen their knowledge about the variety of threats posed by a resurgent and increasingly aggressive Russia to our national security."



UCCA's Washington, D.C.,-based bureau - the Ukrainian National Information Service (UNIS) - requests that you contact your Representative and encourage them to join the CUC.

The CUC is co-chaired by: Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Rep. Andy Harris (R-MD), Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), and Rep. Mike Quigley (D-IL).

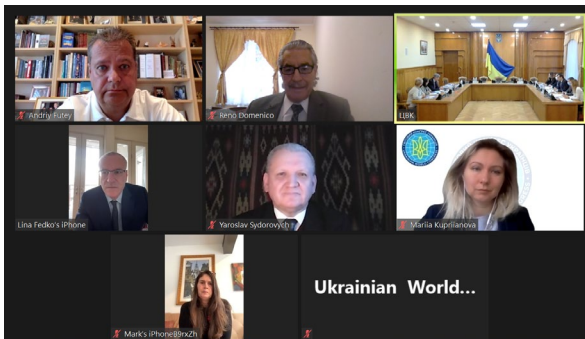
## UWC/UCCA OBSERVER MISSIONS RELEASE REPORT

One hundred days following Ukraine's local elections, UWC along with UCCA issued its final Election Observation Report.

The close to 150-page report, which provides detailed analysis of the elections as well as the work of the UWC/UCCA Observation Missions, was officially presented to the Central Election Commission during the February 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.



The report provides an overview of the joint Election Mission, analytical observations of the electoral process, election threats and risks, review of media monitoring, as well as several recommendations for improving the electoral process in Ukraine.



In conclusion, the UWC and UCCA International Election Observation Missions confirmed that “the local elections in Ukraine, that took place on 25 October 2020, as well as repeat elections on November 15, 22, 29 and December 6, 2020, were conducted in accordance with Ukrainian law and generally meet the standards for democratic elections.”

The complete UWC/UCCA Observer Report can be downloaded (in English and Ukrainian, separately):

- <https://www.ukrainianworldcongress.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/uwc-eom-final-report.pdf>
- <https://www.ukrainianworldcongress.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/zakluchnyi-zvit.pdf>

## UCCA THANKFUL FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT

UCCA would like to acknowledge the generous donations received in response to our 2020 End of Year Appeal to support the work of UCCA.\*

**\$1,000** – The Heritage Foundation of First Security FSB

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*UCCA would also like to thank all those that donated through our UCCA Facebook Page, AmazonSmile and through Network for Good.*

*\*donations received between January 21 and February 8, 2021.*

## H.R. 496 UKRAINE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM SUPPORT ACT RE-INTRODUCED

Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC) has re-introduced a bill in the U.S. House of Representatives, co-sponsored by the bipartisan co-chairs of the Congressional Ukraine Caucus (CUC), regarding religious freedoms in Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine. The bill originated in the last session of Congress but did not pass due to overwhelming circumstances.

In part, the Ukraine Religious Freedom Support Act – H.R. 496 – states that the U.S. federal government would never recognize “the illegal, attempted annexation of Crimea by the Government of the Russia or the separation of any portion of Ukrainian territory through the use of military force.” It additionally holds Russian officials accountable who “directly carried out particularly severe violations of religious freedom in the sovereign territory of Ukraine.”

UNIS urges you to contact your Representative and request their co-sponsorship of H.R.496 – the Ukraine Religious Freedom Support Act. Your assistance is critically important to assure a robust Ukraine policy that strengthens the strategic partnership between Ukraine and the United States.