

# Virginia Skrzyniarz appointed to the Immigration Action Council

Virginia Skrzyniarz, Executive Director of the Piast Institute, has been appointed to the Steering Committee of the Immigration Action Council (IAC) which seeks to build coalitions to protect the rights of immigrants. The IAC has been drawn from a wide variety of ethnic groups. Ms. Skrzyniarz has been designated by the Council as its statewide contact person for all ethnic groups. The group and over one hundred fifty supporters met with Senator Buzz Thomas and Representative Steven Tobocman of the Michigan Legislature who have sponsored legislation (Senate Bill 0196 and House Bill 5095) to allow children of out-of-status or undocumented immigrants who graduated from Michigan high schools to gain residency status to seek college and other post-high school higher education. This is a significant problem for a number of Polish families who have lived in the Detroit area for many years. The children are penalized and denied a college education because their parents have not regularized their status in this country. The legislation will allow students to register as state residents and to be eligible for many financial aid awards. This legislation, says Ms. Skrzyniarz, "is not only good for our children but good for the state and the country, for our culture and our economy. It will give many Polish youngsters

access to the American dream."

The council also met with a representative of the Secretary of State's office to see that the new federal regulations requiring social security numbers to obtain a driver's license be fairly enforced. Ms. Skrzyniarz, who is coordinating the Piast Institute's effort on equity for Polish immigrants, notes that fairness requires that if the tests and documents relating to driver's license applications be available in languages other than English, such as Spanish or Arabic, they should also be available in Polish.

The council is also tracking new legislation on immigration on the Federal level. On May 4, 2004 new House and Senate Bills will be introduced on immigration reform by Senator Edward Kennedy and Representative Bob Menedez. Several provisions, including improvements in the family unification acts and the requirements for earned legalization (green card status), are of considerable interest to many in the Polish community. The Piast Institute will track the progress of the Bill with a special eye on those provisions which can affect the large Polish immigrant community.

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