



Embassy of the United States of America

Office of Public Affairs
Baku, Azerbaijan

83, Azadlıq Prospekti
AZ1007 Bakı, Azərbaycan
Email: HuseynguliyevMM@state.gov

Phone: +(99412) 498 03 35
Fax: +(99412) 498 93 12
URL: <http://azerbaijan.usembassy.gov/>

PRESS RELEASE

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American and Azerbaijani Essay Contest Winners Meet in Baku

Today ten winners of the World Affairs Councils of America (WACA) National High School Essay Contest on the Republic of Azerbaijan were welcome by the Charge de Affairs of the U.S. Embassy, Adam Sterling. The students and their chaperones from the World Affairs Council are in Azerbaijan for a one week study tour sponsored and hosted by the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. The students are in Azerbaijan from June 21st until June 28th and have been learn about the unique history, and geo-political significance of the Azerbaijani republic and its strong relationship with the United States.

The students come from all over the United States from Alaska to Florida and have already visited political and community leaders and modern and historical landmarks in and around the capital. Following today's U.S. embassy meeting with Charge' Sterling the students will attend a roundtable entitled "What it is like to work at a U.S. Embassy" staff from various agencies and offices will discuss their work and partnership with their Azerbaijani counterparts and the people of Azerbaijan.

At a reception following the embassy meetings students will also meet with recently returned Azerbaijani students who have studied in the United States, Peace Corps volunteers and Critical Language Fellows. The US Embassy in close collaboration with of six American Corners in Azerbaijan organized an essay contest. Six winners of this contest will be special guest at the reception. The Azerbaijan students ages 14-15 and 16-17 wrote about their dreams, their vision of the United States and communities. The winners of the contest will be awarded with certificates and monetary prizes at the reception. The US Embassy plans to organize such essay contest twice a year.

"The World Affairs Councils of America's National High School Essay Contest on the Republic of

Azerbaijan provided an excellent opportunity for American students to think as problem-solvers on the international stage -- an important skill they will need in the global economy," said WACA President and CEO Dr. Lori E. Murray. "It was our privilege to be able to use our network's national reach to challenge our American high school students to develop and enhance their critical thinking and to learn about a country whose relationship with the United States is of growing importance." Participants put themselves in the shoes of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's Foreign Policy Adviser for Azerbaijan and were tasked with writing a country brief including U.S. policy recommendations ahead of a visit by Secretary Clinton.

The World Affairs Councils of America network consists of nearly 100 non-partisan, non-profit councils across the country from Alaska to Puerto Rico dedicated to educating and engaging the American public on global issues. Its programs reach more than 500,000 people each year.