

**Ambassador Feinstein's Remarks for Robert Faris Award
Ceremony**

December 6, 2011

Thank you Director Naumann,
Minister Michalowski and President
Komorowski. It's a true honor to be here
with you today celebrating the
achievements of Bob Faris, who has done
so much to contribute to the strength of
Polish-American relations and indeed, of
Poland itself.

This Order for Merit of the Republic of Poland and your presence here tonight, Mr. President, testify to the role Bob and the American people played in unleashing the economic and social potential of the Polish people. The returns on his investment continue to be spread around the world as we speak, from Belarus to Benghazi.

To be sure, Bob Faris' success is but one part of the larger tapestry that is Poland's transformation, one of the most amazing and inspiring in the course of human history. But it is a story that needs to be told.

Today, as we stand here in modern Poland, holder of the EU presidency, the

fastest-growing EU country since 2008, a leader in NATO, and an exporter of democracy, it is hard to imagine how Bob Faris could have done so much with a little seed money from the U.S. government twenty one years ago.

America and Poland, as we all know, have been supporting each others' desires for freedom since the time of Kosciuszko and Pulaski. I was reminded of this just two weeks ago when I helped unveil a statue of President Ronald Reagan, financed by private Polish citizens and located across from the U.S. Embassy.

But political freedom can be hard to sustain without economic independence and vitality. That is why our government

set up the Polish-American Enterprise Fund (PAEF) with money from the Support for East European Democracy Act and that is why we chose a man like Bob Faris to lead it. And lead was exactly what Bob Faris did.

Bob had studied at the University of Chicago, where he probably met a few Polish people, and had been a pioneer in the field of venture capital in America. He brought these talents to Poland, where he

and the Enterprise Fund disbursed 100,000 loans and invested millions of dollars. Is it any wonder that in this country, a leader in entrepreneurship and anti-corruption efforts, his fund became the most successful of all those created in the region?

The results are extraordinary. Bob and the Enterprise Fund increased their initial capital by a factor of ten, creating 125,000 new jobs. Today, the companies the Enterprise Fund helped nurture generate

over \$10 billion a year for the Polish economy.

Yet, the creation of the Polish American Freedom Foundation (PAFF) was in many ways the most important of Bob's achievements. This foundation, created with the proceeds of the Enterprise Fund "godparent," is one of the most successful NGOs I have ever worked with,

and perhaps the largest NGO in Poland today. It is both an instrument for uniting the creative energies of the Polish and American peoples, and a symbol of our cooperation.

PAFF has brought American astronauts to talk with young Poles about careers in science. It is now sending Polish engineering students to internships at leading American firms every summer. It is digitalizing Poland's libraries and organizing conferences on volunteerism. It is reaching out to rural areas across Poland, including sending local leaders on State Department exchanges.

In fact, the Department said the leaders chosen by PAFF were among the

best participants from around the world and had shared many new ideas with their American interlocutors.

PAFF is spreading Bob's legacy around the world by sharing the Polish experience in transformation with countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East.

The Polish and American governments are working hard to spread the gift of freedom to these regions, and we need strong NGO partners like PAFF to

work alongside us. Under the impressive leadership of Minister Michalowski, PAFF organized exchanges like the Region in Transition and the Lane Kirkland programs to help.

As the United States and Poland move forward together to spread peace and prosperity, the Enterprise Fund is absolutely a model to follow. I just wish there more Bob Farises to lead the way.

Congratulations, Bob!