Reception for Winners of the U.S. Embassy/Wprost Essay Contest for Young Journalists
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Remarks by U.S. Ambassador Lee Feinstein (as prepared for delivery)

Szanowni Państwo, drodzy laureaci! Witam serdecznie w naszym domu.

We've been trying to get this group together for several months now, so it's with great pleasure and anticipation that I welcome you all here today. Each time we hold events here at the house, I recognize more and more faces in the crowd, but I am constantly struck by the number of guests who are here for the first time.

To you, I offer a very special welcome, especially to our friends who traveled from throughout Poland to join us in honoring a very special group of people, the winners of the 2010 Wprost/U.S. Embassy essay contest for young journalists. Thank you for sharing this afternoon with us.

We are very proud to partner with Wprost on this twelfth edition of the essay contest for young journalists. I'd like to thank a few very special people at Wprost for their superb collaboration; this essay contest is one of several initiatives on which the Embassy and Wprost have cooperated this year.

First, I'd like to recognize my co-host and friend, Tomasz Lis, who, in just a short time as editor-in-chief, has done fabulous work at Wprost. Tomasz shares a long history with the Embassy and with the United States, dating from his participation in a USG-sponsored exchange program for young journalists at Loyola University in New Orleans back in 1992, to his years as TVP's Washington correspondent, to his interviews with major U.S. officials, most recently Secretary Clinton this July.

I'd also like to express my gratitude to Michal Lisiecki, CEO of Pointe Group, whom I got to know earlier this fall at the Wroclaw Global Forum. The embassy was proud to partner with Wprost, along with Atlantic Council, TPSA, and the city of Wroclaw, among others, on the WGF, which brought leaders in government, economics, academia, and the private sector together for a forum on the key issues in today's transatlantic relationship. Michal, you and your team did an excellent work at the forum, and turned out a first-rate special section on the WGF in Wprost. We look forward to working together again in June.

I'd also like to thank Anna Pawlowska and her colleagues at Wprost, the jury who judged the finalists' essays, and the members of my embassy staff for their work on the contest from start to finish—each year, your contributions deliver a successful competition, and for this, we thank you.

The idea for this contest, which began back when most of this year's essayists were in primary school, is to focus on a major issue for young, aspiring journalists to address; in recent years, contest participants have explored key questions whether Poland can be a good ally of the United States and a good partner for the European Union at the same time, and considered the pros and cons of genetically modified food, and whether GMOs can help eliminate famine. The essays are evaluated on the basis of strength of argument, journalistic edge, and style of expression.

One of the "founding fathers" of the essay competition, Piotr Gabryel, who is now with Rzeczpospolita, is with us today, and I saw the other, Jarosław Giziński, who is now with at Newsweek, earlier this week. Thanks to both of you for the vision and determination to make this contest happen.

I'd also like to thank our friends and colleagues at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, whose generosity over the past nine years in awarding the three-week internship to the contest's winner has paid great dividends, and inspired some our laureates to pursue careers in journalism. The embassy is proud to sponsor the internship each year.

The topic of this year's essay competition drew a great deal of attention in our house. As some of you know, my wife Elaine is a journalist, and this question of whether print press is worth saving in an era of

digitalization and technology truly peaked my interest. And I've certainly enjoyed reading some of the more than 100 essays that came from young Poles across the country.

The future of print journalism is addressed each and every day by newspaper owners, publishers, editors, reporters, and readers alike, day in and day out.

The print journalist industry is changing, and no one, nowhere is immune to this trend—while this phenomenon is slower-moving in Poland than it is in other parts of the world, changes are palpable everywhere. The paper that was once a daily is now a biweekly. The paper that cost 50 cents just ten years ago now costs $3. You now have to pay to do your favorite crossword puzzle online. Decreased readership, increased costs, and the global financial crisis may have exacerbated the challenges to the industry over the past few years, but the newspaper industry is no stranger to having to fight to stay in the game.

Our third place winner, Adam Sikora from Katowice, noted in his essay that in the last century alone, some speculated that radio, then tv, then cable, then internet, would kill print journalism. Yet, it still lives.

From the games our kids play, and the way they play them, to the way we conduct diplomacy throughout the world, technology has an

incredible, and ever growing, influence on the way we live—and there's no sign of that changing. For the most part, technology helps us in our lives and work—often making things simpler and more efficient.

However, while technology enables us to access information quickly, cheaply, and without limits, it can also lead to an information overload, as our second prize winner, Joanna Nacierowska of Warsaw, wrote.

I agree with most of our essayists and truly believe that there is a natural need for balance. As our grand prize winner, Monika Rucinska of Krakow, wrote, "On the one hand, there is an army of high-tech I-Pads, gigabytes of e-paper and the omnipresent Network. What's on the other hand? A simple editor, rustle of paper, smell of print, coffee, cigarettes, haste and tons of pens. And a thousand years of tradition."

While the benefits and advantages of a digital press are innumerable, this doesn't have to be a case of either/or, out with the old and in with the new. As Monika so aptly pointed out, "there's no need to strike Gutenberg off the pedestal in favor of the Internet." Print press is well and alive.

And so, with that, I'd like to congratulate all the winners once again, and thank you all for sharing this afternoon with us. I'll floor over to Tomasz Lis for the long-awaited presentation of awards.