

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

July 28, 2017

The Honorable Dalia Grybauskaite
President of the Republic of Lithuania
Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania
S. Daukanto aikste 3
Vilnius 01122
Lithuania

To Her Excellency President Dalia Grybauskaitė:

We write to express our opposition to the conversion of the old Vilnius Palace of Concerts and Sports into a convention center on the site of the old Jewish cemetery in the Snipiskes district of Vilnius. Instead of expanding the abandoned Sports Palace, the old Jewish cemetery should be preserved as a holy place.

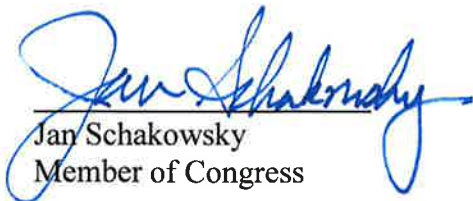
The cemetery is one of the last remnants of the great Jewish community in Vilnius, and many of Vilnius' preeminent scholars and figures are interred here. The cemetery is a historical site of enormous cultural significance, both locally and to the worldwide community interested in its preservation. It should be treated with dignity and respect.

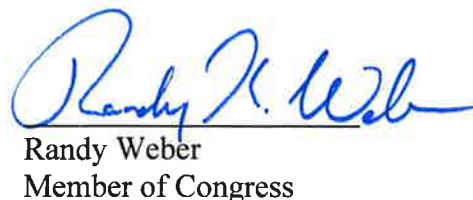
We fully endorse House Concurrent Resolution 255, passed by United States House of Representatives in 2008, which states that the continued desecration "is an affront to the international Jewish community, the American people, and everyone who values religious freedom and ethnic diversity around the world" and calls on the Government of Lithuania to take "steps that guarantee the permanent preservation of the cemetery site."

The very presence of the existing structure in the middle of the old Jewish cemetery desecrates it and conflicts with the respect for human dignity that forms the basis of Western Civilization. By contrast, moving the convention center project to another site, and permitting the dismantling of the abandoned Sports Palace it was to replace, would affirm the Lithuanian government's commitment to basic human rights.

We urge you to move the Convention Center to an alternate site and thereby preserve the old Jewish cemetery.

Sincerely,


Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

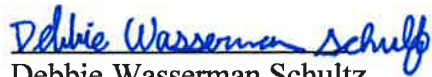

Randy Weber
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



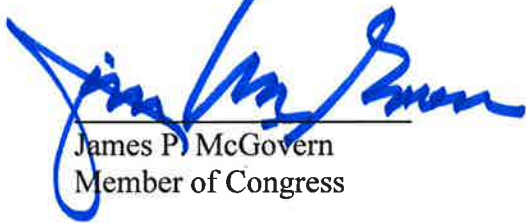
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress




John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress