1104THCONGRESS
2DSESSIONH. CON. RES. 165
CONCURRENT RESOLUTION
Saluting and congratulating Polish people around
land’s first constitution.
the 205th anniversary of the adoption of Po-the world as, on May 3, 1996, they commemorate

104TH CONGRESS

2D SESSION H. CON. RES. 165

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION Whereas, on May 3, 1996, Polish people around the world,

including Americans of Polish descent, will celebrate the
205th anniversary of the adoption of the first Polish con-

stitution; Whereas American Revolutionary War hero Thaddeus Kosciuszko introduced the concept of constitutional de- mocracy to his native country of Poland;

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Whereas the Polish constitution of 1791 was the first liberal

constitution in Europe and represented Central-Eastern Europe’s first attempt to end the feudal system of gov-

ernment; Whereas this Polish constitution was designed to protect Po-
land’s sovereignty and national unity and to create a pro-

gressive constitutional monarchy; Whereas this Polish constitution was the first constitution in Central-Eastern Europe to secure individual and religious
freedom for all persons in Poland; Whereas this Polish constitution formed a government com-

posed of distinct legislative, executive, and judicial pow-

ers; Whereas this Polish constitution declared that ‘‘all power in
civil society should be derived from the will of the peo-

ple’’; Whereas this Polish constitution revitalized the parliamentary
system by placing preeminent lawmaking power in the House of Deputies, by subjecting the Sejm to majority
rule, and by granting the Sejm the power to remove min-

isters, appoint commissars, and choose magistrates; Whereas this Polish constitution provided for significant eco-
nomic, social, and political reforms by removing inequal-
ities between the nobility and the bourgeoisie, by rec-
ognizing town residents as ‘‘freemen’’ who had judicial
autonomy and expanded rights, and by extending the pro-
tection of the law to the peasantry who previously had no

recourse against the arbitrary actions of feudal lords; Whereas, although this Polish constitution was in effect for

less than 2 years, its principles endured and it became
the symbol around which a powerful new national con-

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sciousness was born, helping Poland to survive long peri-

ods of misfortune over the following 2 centuries; and Whereas, in only the last 5 years, Poland has realized the
promise held in the Polish constitution of 1791, has

emerged as an independent nation after its people led the movement that resulted in historic changes in Central- Eastern Europe, and is moving toward full integration with the Euro-Atlantic community of nations: Now,

therefore, be it

1 Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate
2 concurring), That—
3 (1) the people of the United States salute and

4 congratulate Polish people around the world, includ-
5 ing Americans of Polish descent, on the adoption of

6 the first Polish constitution;
7 (2) the people of the United States recognize
8 Poland’s rebirth as a free and independent nation in

9 the spirit of the legacy of the Polish constitution of
10 1791; and

11 (3) the Congress authorizes and urges the
12 President of the United States to call upon the Gov-
13 ernors of the States, the leaders of local govern-

14 ments, and the people of the United States to join

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1 in this recognition with appropriate ceremonies and
2 activities.

Passed the House of Representatives May 21, 1996.

Attest:

Clerk.