



June 20, 2011

Legislative Alert ©

As a part of NOPA's mission to empower Portuguese-Americans, Legislative Alerts are sent out every two weeks as pertinent developments occur in order to keep the community informed of legislative action at the national level. This objective, non-partisan report aims to educate those interested about action on Capitol Hill that may affect the Portuguese-American community at large.

If you have any questions about federal policy and proposed legislation, please contact NOPA's Government Affairs Team at info@nopa-us.org or 703-389-3512.

Open Letter to Presidential Candidate Tim Pawlenty Addressing Debate Remarks About Portugal

June 19, 2011

Mr. Tim Pawlenty
Pawlenty 2012
PO Box 385340
Bloomington, MN 55438

Re: Open Letter Addressing Negative Reference to Portugal

Dear Mr. Pawlenty:

At the GOP's New Hampshire debate on June 14th, your comment that "This president is a declinist. He views America as one of equals around the world. We're not the same as Portugal; we're not the same as Argentina" has raised some concerns on how you may view our community and the country many of us and our ancestors came from. We, at The National Organization of Portuguese Americans (NOPA), wish to take this opportunity to provide you with information with the purpose of improving your views about Portugal.

While we appreciate the candidate's views of American exceptionalism, we were disappointed by the derogatory tone and statement made about Portugal. We would like to remind you of the importance of the long-standing relationship between the United States and Portugal dating back to 1791 and Portugal's contributions and significant standing in the world.

- Modern day Portugal has been an integral member of the European Union (EU) and is a strong proponent of European integration. While Portugal held the presidency of the EU

Council for the third time during the latter half of 2007, Portugal oversaw the signing of a new EU reform treaty, staged EU summits with Russia, India, and China, and held a second EU-Africa summit. Furthermore, Portugal is a founding member of NATO and continues to be an active member of the alliance.

- Contributing to the strong ties between the United States and Portugal are the sizable Portuguese communities in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, California, and Hawaii. The latest census estimates that 1.3 million individuals living in the United States are of Portuguese ancestry. There are also about 20,000 Americans living in Portugal.
- A large percentage of Portuguese-Americans are descendents of immigrants who came from the Azores in the late 1950's after the islands experienced several volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, leaving many without homes. Thousands of victims were in need of aid, and the United States, in a gesture of international goodwill, allocated visas to the people of the Azores to find work and rebuild their lives in America. Since the Azores are known for their rich soil and temperate climate, many of the Portuguese refugees settled in regions of the United States that supported agriculture and dairy, such as the San Joaquin Valley in Central California. Many other Portuguese from the Azores settled in parts of the nation with burgeoning fishing industries, particularly in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York where they continued to diversify and contribute to the nation's economy and common heritage.
- According to the U.S. Department of State, bilateral ties with Portugal date from the earliest years of the United States. Following the Revolutionary War, Portugal was among the first countries to recognize the United States. On February 21, 1791, President George Washington opened formal diplomatic relations and the oldest continuously-operating U.S. Consulate in the world, since 1795, is in Ponta Delgada on the Portuguese island of São Miguel in the Azores.
- Portugal often emphasizes its support for strong European ties with the United States, particularly on defense and security issues. Portugal sees its role as host of NATO's "Joint Command Lisbon," located near Lisbon, as an important sign of alliance interest in transatlantic security issues.
- Finally, the long-standing defense relationship between the United States and Portugal is excellent, centered on the Agreement on Cooperation and Defense (ACD) signed in 1995; however, a U.S. military forward presence at Lajes Field, in the Azores, extends back to World War II and it remains a critical logistic hub for U.S. Transportation Command, U.S. European Command, and NATO Allies. The U.S. Air Force's 65th Air Base Wing is based in Lajes. This access supports deployed U.S. forces throughout Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. U.S. missions currently supported by a presence at Lajes Field include counterterrorism, humanitarian, and combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Portugal also hosts NATO Allied Joint Force Command Lisbon, which is one of the three main subdivisions of NATO's Allied Command Operations.

Less than a week before your debate on June 10th, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, on behalf of President Obama and the people of the United States, was delighted to congratulate the people of Portugal as we celebrated our National Day. She stated how "Portuguese history and culture continues to inspire the people of the United States. Whether through the bravery of Vasco de da Gama, the literary works of Luís de Camões, or the contributions of today's Portuguese-Americans, Portugal's presence and influence in America is alive and well." We at NOPA, and the community we represent, would hope a candidate for the office of President of our Nation would be more aware of the importance the bi-lateral ties between the U.S. and Portugal play for the future and defense of America.

Respectfully yours,

Francisco Simião

Francisco Semião
Founding Director

Congressional Portuguese American Caucus Membership Update

We'd like to welcome the latest Members to join the Congressional Portuguese American Caucus for the 112th Congress:

Rep. John Olver (D-MA-1)
Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D CA-30)

The Congressional Portuguese American Caucus is up to 23 Members. The full membership list is below. If you have not done so already, we strongly urge you to contact the caucus members, especially if they represent your district/state, and thank them for joining the caucus and for supporting the community. It's important that policymakers know how much our community appreciates their support.

While we continue to push forward with our outreach campaign inviting Members of Congress to join the caucus, we can't stress enough how important for policymakers to hear from their constituents. We have received numerous responses from Congressional offices saying they need the requests to come from constituents in their districts/states.

We urge all individuals and organizations in the Portuguese American community to reach out to your Member of Congress and ask them to join the Caucus. Your emails and/or calls make a big difference.

For **sample thank you/invitation letters, talking points, tips for contacting Congress, and useful resource links**, please click on this link to April's caucus alert: <http://myemail.constantcontact.com/Congressional-Portuguese-American-Caucus-Update---Call-To-Action.html?soid=1102586872185&aid=DVv5hbJ72HA>

Congressional Portuguese American Caucus - 112th

Rep. Joe Baca (D CA-43)

Website: <http://baca.house.gov/>

Contact: <http://baca.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=7&iontree=7>

Rep. Leonard Boswell (D IA-3)

Website: <http://boswell.house.gov/>

Contact: <http://boswell.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=4&iontree=4>

Rep. Dennis Cardoza, Co-Chair (D CA-18)

Website: <http://cardoza.house.gov/>

Contact: <http://cardoza.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=3&iontree=3>

Rep. David Cicilline (D RI-1)

Website: <http://cicilline.house.gov/>

Contact: <https://cicilline.house.gov/contact-me>

Rep. Jim Costa, Co-Chair (D CA-20)

Website: <http://costa.house.gov/>

Contact: http://costa.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=369&Itemid=31

Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D TX-25)

Website: <http://doggett.house.gov/>

Contact: https://forms.house.gov/doggett/webforms/issue_subscribe.htm

Rep. Barney Frank (D MA-4)

Website: <http://www.house.gov/frank/>

Contact: <http://www.house.gov/frank/contact/index.html>

Rep. Marcia L. Fudge (D OH-11)

Website: <http://fudge.house.gov/>

Contact: <http://fudge.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=190&iontree=4,190>

Rep. Mike Grimm (R NY-13)

Website: <http://grimm.house.gov/>

Contact: <https://grimm.house.gov/contact-me>

Rep. Colleen Hanabusa (D HI-1)

Website: <http://hanabusa.house.gov/>

Contact: <https://hanabusa.house.gov/contact-me>

Rep. Mike Honda (D CA-15)

Website: <http://honda.house.gov/>

Contact: https://forms.house.gov/honda/webforms/issue_subscribe.htm

Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D TX-18)

Website: <http://jacksonlee.house.gov/>

Contact: <http://jacksonlee.house.gov/Contact/>

Rep. Bill Keating (D MA-10)

Website: <http://keating.house.gov/>

Contact: <https://keating.house.gov/contact-me>

Rep. Jim Langevin (D RI-2)

Website: <http://langevin.house.gov/>

Contact: <http://langevin.house.gov/contact/>

Rep. Jim McGovern (D MA-3)

Website: <http://mcgovern.house.gov/>

Contact: <http://mcgovern.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=47&iontree=47>

Rep. Richard E. Neal (D MA-2)

Website: <http://neal.house.gov/>

Contact: http://neal.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=118&Itemid=6

Rep. John Olver (D-MA-1)

Website: <http://olver.house.gov/>

Contact: https://forms.house.gov/olver/webforms/issue_subscribe.htm

Rep. Linda Sanchez (D CA-39)

Website: <http://lindasanchez.house.gov/>

Contact: https://forms.house.gov/lindasanchez/webforms/issue_subscribe.htm

Loretta Sanchez (D CA-47)

Website: <http://www.lorettasanchez.house.gov/>

Contact: http://www.lorettasanchez.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=218&Itemid=1

Rep. Pete Stark (D CA-13)

Website: <http://www.stark.house.gov/>

Contact: http://www.stark.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1524&Itemid=98

Rep. Niki Tsongas (D MA-5)

Website: <http://tsongas.house.gov/>

Contact: <http://tsongas.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=116&iointree=116>

Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D CA-30)

Website: <http://www.henrywaxman.house.gov/>

Contact: <http://www.henrywaxman.house.gov/Contact/>

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D RI)

Website: <http://whitehouse.senate.gov/>

Contact: <http://whitehouse.senate.gov/contact/>