



November 18, 2020

Dear Latvian-Americans and our friends abroad,

On this 102th anniversary of Latvia's independence, I address you from Washington, DC, where I live and where we are enjoying a beautiful autumn with colorful foliage. Colorful leaves always remind me of our Latvian holidays – Lāčplēša Day and Latvian Independence Day on November 18.

We are saddened that this year it is not possible for ALA representatives to be with you during the holidays, to participate in community events and address our members and supporters in person. These days we all are feeling how much life has been changed by the coronavirus.

But, we can reminisce about the great times, when we *have* been together. The board of the American Latvian Association has worked hard to visit and involve Latvian communities all over the United States.

In the past ten years, ALA Congresses have been held in Los Angeles, Seattle, Denver, Milwaukee, Detroit, Indianapolis, Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Petersburg, FL, and Washington, DC. In the last five years, under my leadership, the Association has held its board meetings in San Francisco, Portland (OR), Lincoln, Atlanta, New York, as well as Chicago and Detroit and our home base, Washington, DC. Our board members have visited and addressed community centers in Cleveland, Kalamazoo, Phoenix, Rochester (NY), Garezers, Katskiji, and Priedaine.

Everywhere we have been met with hospitality, respect and a willingness to work together. We have listened to your priorities and offered our perspective on how to best continue our joint work on preserving the Latvian cultural identity, the Latvian language, and an interest in Latvia among Latvians of the diaspora. We help how we can, by supporting schools, cultural events and political activities.

There are cities and Latvian communities that I have not mentioned today, but, before the pandemic, we had planned to meet you in St. Paul, MN for the ALA Congress this year, and our September board meeting was to be held in Boston this September! We hope to see you all again soon, and that includes all of the new centers and smaller communities that we might not have visited recently – South Carolina, Texas, and Southern California. Isn't it great that there are so many Latvian-Americans!

We are proud to be working with all of you. We strive to be your partners and an organization that can unite all of our diverse interests and needs. But we all have a common mission – to protect and preserve our sense of belonging to Latvia. I hope, that during this time of self-isolation, we will be reminded of how important to your lives are our Latvian friends, communities and organizations.

I believe, that when we meet again we will be stronger and more united!  
Best wishes on Latvian Independence Day!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Pēteris Blumbergs'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'P' and 'B'.

Pēteris Blumbergs, ALA President