

U.S. rep brings Lithuanian president to county

By Joe Bauman
staff writer

One of the world's newest heads of state was in Oakland County Tuesday as the Southfield Optimist Club played host to one of the world's newest heads of state, a person who could be considered to be one of the greatest optimists of our time.

Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis, who left his life as a music professor to lead the fight for freedom against the Soviet Union, visited Southfield and the Detroit area as the special guest of U.S. Rep. Sander Levin, D-Southfield.

Landsbergis played a pivotal role in the revolt of Lithuania and the other Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia against communist rule, and for his efforts was elected president of the new independent parliament by the country's 3.7-million people.

Despite the successful fight for independence, Landsbergis told those attending the breakfast meeting that his nation and people face many challenges even greater than anticipated food and energy shortages this winter.

"The troops of the Soviet army are still here in our nation and we have no power to put them out," he said. "The power is the United States and democracy and we look to you to help complete and guarantee our freedom."

During a question-and-answer session with the audience, Landsbergis said his government is doing all it can to prevent a wave of anti-semitic activities in the region from reaching Lithuania.

Reps back move to keep drug money for schools

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Many Republican lawmakers joined state House Democrats in asking Gov. John Engler to back away from his effort to give \$12 million in federal aid to his drug czar, Bob Peterson, and take it away from the state Department of Education.

order would "take federal drug-free school money from the state Department of Education and give it to the drug czar."

"When Congress passed it in 1986, it was heavily debated whether the money should go through governors or schools. It's ironic that (Massachusetts) Democratic Gov. Michael Dukakis fought the hardest for the money to go to the governors."

"Congress wanted it to go to the classrooms to teach children what would happen if they used drugs. It's pointed out 18 specific times that 30 percent went to the governors and 70 percent to the state educational agencies to distribute to local school districts."

"The state has distributed it through the Michigan Model (for Comprehensive Health Education). Some 525 of 564 (public) school districts and 144 private schools have chosen the Michigan Model for doing away with drug use," Keith said.

TO PETERSON'S charge that schools are misusing drug funds to teach kids to brush their teeth, Keith

replied, "Youngsters should know that drug use leads to the deterioration of teeth and gums."

Keith said Engler's compromise plan to set up a drug board with three members of the State Board of Education would "subordinate" the state board.

Arguing for Engler's position, Rep. John Strand, R-Lapeer, said, "The drug czar is merely serving as an agent for the funds. This is not a pro or anti-Michigan Model vote. They (schools) will get their share."

Don Sweeney, director of the Michigan Model program in the Department of Education, said the health program was chosen as the vehicle for school anti-drug programs.

"We have done an analysis, and 74 percent of the material included in health education is aimed at keeping kids from abusing drugs or alcohol," Sweeney said.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

LEVIN AND LANDSBERGIS first met in September during a Congressional fact-finding mission to the Baltic states, and the new president had a chance to help Levin celebrate the congressman's birthday.

"When I learned of Mr. Landsbergis' visit I was anxious to return the hospitality and have him visit this area," said Levin, who is pushing legislation to make it easier for American companies to do business with Eastern European countries.

"The president wanted to see typical American citizenry in action so to and behold we melded one of the great optimists of the world with the Southfield Optimist Club."

Landsbergis said the new government already has embraced its Jewish population and has helped re-establish important religious and cultural centers in the country.

"It has not been a problem so far, and we are doing everything we can to prevent it from occurring," Landsbergis said, including taking the somewhat unpopular stand of infringing on freedom of expression by making it illegal to distribute anti-semitic literature.

ists hope to forge a second new relationship in the near future.

Vic Nakas, a former Birmingham resident, is an assistant to Landsbergis and has been assigned to the new Lithuanian embassy in Washington as an information officer. Nakas accompanied Landsbergis to Southfield and served as translator for the president.

In addition, the Southfield Optimists gained the pledge of assistance by Landsbergis to help establish an Optimist Club in Lithuania.

"There is a strong Eastern European influence in this area—with many people still speaking the native languages," Levin said at the end of the program. "This is a great time, and there are great opportunities to help these fledgling democracies."

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