



Speech by German Ambassador Andreas Michaelis

Day of German Unity

September 25, 2024, Washington, DC

Governor Murphy, Mrs. Murphy,

Minister Liminski,

Members of Congress, Senators,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends and Colleagues:

Today we are celebrating 35 years of German unity. We are also celebrating German-U.S. relations.

After my arrival last year, I told you that I was looking forward to exploring this country. My wife Heike and I have managed to travel quite a bit in the interim. Thank you for welcoming us wherever we go – from Texas to Illinois, from North Carolina to California, and everywhere in between. It is a privilege, and I speak for both of us when I say thank you.

Now the obvious question is: What lessons did we learn?

First lesson:

Our economic partnership is extremely strong.

Whenever I travel outside the beltway, I see amazing investments being made by German companies, from car manufacturing to high-tech laser instruments to clean energy start-ups. There is always more to explore: A German company that builds autonomous vehicles opened its first plant in Florida. A state-of-the-art recycling facility, the first of its kind in the U.S., was inaugurated last week in Georgia. This economic exchange, these investments in our two countries are a win-win for both of us, and both our economies will be stronger in the end. Our economic cooperation is the beating heart of our relations.

Second lesson:

We are closely connected through our civil societies.

Everywhere I go, I meet with elected officials who are eager to expand their ties with Germany – or to start new ones. I experience the multitude of direct contacts between economic offices and chambers, universities and research centers, municipalities and cultural institutions. Those contacts and ties are the lifelines of our relations.

We at the Embassy are trying to contribute to this network. In May, we hosted the first German and American Mayors Conference in New York City, with a follow-up conference taking place in Germany in 2025. This year, we are organizing an unprecedented number of study trips to Germany on a variety of issues. And we are intensifying our cooperation with individual states. Also, our high-level officials travel not only to DC but outside the beltway. Foreign Minister Baerbock traveled to Texas. Defense Minister Pistorius visited Alaska and Hawaii. Economic Minister Habeck went to Illinois.

Third lesson:

Germany and the US are global partners. This is what you experience here in Washington on a daily basis.

Our cooperation in foreign policy, security policy and defense policy makes a crucial difference in the world. This is best showcased by our joint support for Ukraine's fight for freedom. Under the leadership of the U.S., the EU and its member states have stepped up to the plate.

Germany remains Ukraine's biggest supporter after the U.S. Our cooperation is also manifested in NATO, with the vast majority of member states now reaching the two per cent goal. The NATO anniversary summit has clearly shown that NATO is stronger and more vital than ever.

The extraordinarily close bond between our two countries is embodied by our guest of honor. He is himself a champion of German-U.S. relations, a true transatlanticist, and a fellow European football fan. He is a strong proponent of strengthening our relations both on a national level and between his home state of New Jersey and the German federal government, as well as with German state governments.

Governor Murphy, Mrs. Murphy, it is an honor to welcome you here tonight. I look forward to exploring together with you tonight's exhibits about North Rhine-Westphalia's presence in the U.S., having a crisp Veltins beer, and experiencing Borussia Dortmund's Yellow Wall up close (which is fine, as long as they don't win against 1 FC Union Berlin) at the booths showcasing North Rhine-Westphalia next to the Residence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to single out our main partner of this evening's celebration. Against the backdrop of a multilayered relationship, we are partnering with the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the largest state in Germany, for today's celebrations. The partnership highlights North Rhine-Westphalia's initiative NRW-USA Year 2023/2024, which honors, strengthens, and celebrates the close ties with the United States.

Needless to say, North Rhine-Westphalia and New Jersey share a special bond as national economic powerhouses, which is also why New Jersey has played an important and prominent role in NRW-USA Year.

North Rhine-Westphalia is at the forefront when it comes to establishing a diverse ever-growing network of partners in a variety of fields throughout the U.S. This is why we are proud to partner with the state for this year's event.

I am very grateful that Nathanael Liminski, the Minister of Federal, European, and International Affairs of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, is here with us tonight. Minister Liminski, thank you for what you are doing to further strengthen the bonds between our two countries, and for being here personally.

I would like to warmly thank Minister Nathanael Liminski and all our partners from North Rhine-Westphalia for their outstanding support.

As always, I would also like to thank our sponsors whose names you can see to the left and right of the stage, as well as on the displays throughout the garden.

Minister Liminski, - now the floor is yours.