



**Farewell Reception for Wolfgang Dexheimer**  
September 15, 2004  
Ambassador Coats

Ambassador Turdiu (Albania)  
Ambassador Rafajlovski (Macedonia)  
Dr. Ramsauer, MdB  
Herr Scheelen, MdB  
Director Maier  
Ladies and gentlemen

Wolfgang Dexheimer, on behalf of the American Embassy, I would like to offer our congratulations on a distinguished career and our gratitude and respect for your dedication and commitment to international exchange and education.

I would also like to take this opportunity to greet your wife, Brigitte Birke-Dexheimer. Brigitte worked as exchanges coordinator for many years at our Embassy in Bonn. She made an enduring contribution to German-American relations in that position.

Wolfgang, one of the last times we met was at a reception in June at the Bundestag for the 20th group of American participants in the annual Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program. Their exchange year was coming to an end. I remember looking around the room to see happy and satisfied faces – at the end of what was certainly a challenging and demanding experience during a difficult period in German-American relations. But I sensed a very positive energy in these young people and a real commitment and dedication to the new relationships that they had formed. The experience had obviously touched their lives and the lives of those around them. That to me was a very tangible sign of the benefits of international exchange.

Over the past 20 years, some 15,000 young Germans and Americans have participated in the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program. The ongoing success of this program is a demonstration of the strength and depth of the German-American partnership and a true symbol of our friendship. Exchanges are more important than ever before in strengthening international dialogue and understanding.

Over fifty years ago, Senator Fulbright described his vision of how "educational exchange can turn nations into people." That was true then -- and it is true today.

Wolfgang and Brigitte, you have both lived that vision.

Thank you. All the best in the future.