

March 12, 2002
Fulbright 50th Anniversary Commemoration
German Foreign Office, Berlin

Foreign Minister Fischer,
Assistant Secretary Harrison,
Dr. von Halem,
Dr. Schuette,
Members of the Fulbright Commission,
Mrs. Fulbright,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The date was September 27, 1945. The world was picking up the pieces after a war that had laid waste to so much of Europe, the Soviet Union and Asia. A junior U.S. Senator, J. William Fulbright, introduced in the U.S. Congress a bill "for the promotion of international goodwill through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture, and science." The program was to be initially financed by the sale of U.S. war surplus property. The bill was passed by the Congress and signed on August 1, 1946, by President Harry S Truman.

Later Senator Fulbright described the exchange program that was named after him as "a modest program with an immodest aim -- the achievement in international affairs of a regime that is more civilized, rational and humane."

Well, here we are, 50 years after the Federal Republic of Germany joined the Fulbright Program in 1952, celebrating this "modest" program, this "immodest" aim.

As a former Senator, I have nothing but admiration and respect for Senator Fulbright's foresight, initiative, creativity and genius. To come up with such a simple but effective program to foster such an important goal is every legislator's goal, but one that very few actually accomplish.

Historians have described the Fulbright Program as "one of the really generous and imaginative things that have been done in the world since World War II" and "the most fabulously profitable investment ever authorized by Congress."

It's difficult to think of any other program that has brought so much worldwide credit and goodwill to the United States, and had such an impact on international relations.

The "modest program" -- to quote Fulbright again -- that brought 35 students and a single professor to the United States in 1948 and sent 65 Americans abroad, has allowed, over the decades, nearly a quarter of a million people to draw on the benefits of the "Fulbright experience." Since 1952, fifty years ago, when the Federal Republic of Germany became the 25th member to join the Fulbright Program, the German-American Fulbright Program has sponsored over 30,000 Americans and Germans.

At a 20th anniversary celebration in 1966, Senator Fulbright talked about the goals of the program -- "to bring a little more knowledge, a little more reason, and a little more compassion into world affairs and thereby to increase the chance that nations will learn at last to live in peace and friendship."

As I travel around Germany, meeting "Fulbrighters" and other former exchangees, I am often

reminded of Senator Fulbright's words.

The aftermath of the shock and horror of September 11th has shown us the strength and the depth of the powerful tradition of transatlantic cooperation and of our relationship with good friends like Germany.

We do have a common purpose and we do share common values -- respect for all human life and a determination to ensure the safety and security of our people, to uphold the rule of law, and to advance the cause of freedom and democracy.

And we have common purpose in sharing dialogue that allows good friends to find solutions to difficult problems. This is basic to the Fulbright "experience."

I know that Secretary of State Powell shares these feelings. This morning, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the German-American Fulbright Program, he sends you his personal greetings and congratulations.

I join the Secretary in saluting all past and present German and American Fulbrighters.