

**DENNIS J. KUCINICH**  
10TH DISTRICT, OHIO

2445 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515  
(202) 225-5871

14400 DETROIT AVENUE  
LAKEWOOD, OHIO 44107  
(216) 228-8850

PARMATOWN MALL  
7904 DAY DRIVE  
PARMA, OH 44129  
(440) 845-2707



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
[www.kucinich.house.gov](http://www.kucinich.house.gov)

CHAIRMAN,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DOMESTIC POLICY  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND  
GOVERNMENT REFORM  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

October 29, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Clinton  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

I urge you to encourage the government of the Slovak Republic to repeal the discriminatory and undemocratic language law that recently took effect on September 1, 2009. This law appears to be born of unresolved ethnic tensions in the region and allows unfair persecution of ethnic minorities.

The new Slovak language law prohibits the use of any language other than Slovak in official communication and can result in a fine of between €100 and €5,000. Anyone employed by the state, including all civil servants, judges, members of the armed forces, police and firefighters, are required to use the official language in "the performance of their duties." A firefighter responding in the Hungarian language to a call for help could be subject to disciplinary action under the law.

The law also requires centuries-old family memorials, such as gravestones inscribed in a language other than Slovak, to be re-carved. If an inscription is in Hungarian it can be kept but the inscription must also be carved in Slovak and must be at least the same size or larger than the Hungarian inscription. The law ensures the destruction of many historically important memorials and is an affront to the rich history of ethnic minorities in the region.

The law codifies inequality between languages and undermines equality between the people of Slovakia. This has already resulted in growing tensions between ethnic minorities and the rest of Slovakian society. These tensions are exploited and possibly encouraged by political interests.

Additionally, tensions have increased considerably between Slovakia and neighboring countries over the language law and the increasingly undemocratic treatment of ethnic minorities. A rise in ethnic tensions in the Central Eastern European region undermines the stability of the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Freedom of speech is among the most important principles of a free and democratic society. I believe that the current Slovakian language law violates these principles. I urge you to engage the government of the Slovak Republic to ensure that all Slovaks are treated equally and that the rights of ethnic minorities are protected in law through cooperation and mutual respect by the Slovakian government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis J. Kucinich". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "D" and "K".

Dennis J. Kucinich  
Member of Congress