

Archbishop Borys with Ukrainian American Community Leaders in Meeting with Biden Administration

Two Biden Administration members, Chris Smith of the National Security Council and William McIntee, Associate Director for Public Engagement, held an online meeting with Ukrainian American community leaders. Among community leaders in attendance were His Excellency Borys Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Church's Archeparchy of Philadelphia, His Excellency Daniel Zelinsky of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the U.S.A., Andriy Futey of the UCCA, Michael Sawkiw of the UNIS and U.S. Holodomor Committee, and Walter Zaryckyj of the Center for U.S.-Ukraine Relations. The event was organized by Ulana Mazurkevich.

Chris Smith has been the NSC's director for Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, and the Caucasus since February. Prior to this he served as INL director at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv from 2014 to 2018 where he helped establish anticorruption institutions and worked on police reform. "I bring these experiences with me to work every day," Smith said during the Zoom call. He also noted that President Biden knows a lot about Ukraine and has a deep history of commitment to the country dating back to 2009 when he began visiting while Vice President of the Obama Administration.

The Biden Administration's strategic goals regarding Ukraine are revitalizing U.S.-Ukraine bilateral relations, helping Ukraine in a challenging struggle against Russian aggression, as well as helping in the war against corruption.

"If Ukraine can succeed—can integrate with the West, can strengthen its institutions, can deliver on prosperity, can deliver on the aspirations that were voiced at Maidan and every day since and before—that would solidify and secure democracy and Western values not only in Eastern Europe but also in Central Europe," said the NSC representative. He believes Ukraine's success holds prospects for many people in Russia who seek to build a better nation.

U.S. strategy in Ukraine focuses on three major lines of effort: standing up to Russian aggression; structural anticorruption reform, which is an area where the U.S. can extend assistance in action-oriented results; and the economy—namely energy infrastructure.

Archbishop Borys Gudziak expressed gratitude to the President's Administration and Consular General in Kyiv for the recent breakthrough in issuing visas to Ukrainian Catholic clergy ready to serve in the United States. Ukrainian Catholicism in the U.S. has been crippled by a clergy shortage, and efforts to meet the needs of the faithful were only exacerbated by the pandemic. "Having good clergy here will help address diverse social needs and will save a lot of taxpayer dollars if we can do some preventive medicine in the social context," explained the Archbishop.

He also expressed thanks for the support given to the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, where he serves as president, as well as for attention paid to the dire humanitarian situation in Ukraine. The Metropolitan stressed the importance of media support in this respect. "Russia is waging informational warfare, and we ask that there be continuing official explanations on many fronts—to the American public, American political leaders, and to the international community about exactly what is going on. The good offices of different information agencies of the U.S. are highly appreciated, and I hope that they continue their efforts."

By Mariana Karapinka