

# News

1701 K Street NW, Suite 903  
Washington, DC 20006  
Telephone: 202-785-5056  
Fax: 202-785-5058  
Email: [info@usbaltic.org](mailto:info@usbaltic.org)

From the U.S.- Baltic Foundation

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Contact: Trevor Dane

Tel: 202-785-5056

E-mail: [info@usbaltic.org](mailto:info@usbaltic.org)

- **Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves to be Guest of Honor at 2008 Annual U.S.-Baltic Gala**
- **USBF Executive Director and Gala Chair to visit Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania This Week**

WASHINGTON, DC – Maria Kivisild Ogrydziak, Chairman of the U.S.- Baltic Foundation’s 2008 Gala Committee, announced today that Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of Estonia, will headline a three-day series of Baltic cultural and business development events on April 18- 20 at the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel, 1127 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington, DC. Sponsored by The U.S.- Baltic Foundation (USBF), the 2008 *Annual U.S.-Baltic Gala* will feature a business conference, an exchange program summit, a silent auction and black-tie gala dinner to highlight the special and growing ties between the U.S. and the Baltic States.

The weekend will begin with a business networking program on Friday morning followed by a VIP reception (traditionally hosted by one of the Scandinavian Embassies) that evening. On Saturday, from 0900 to 1300 at the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel, there will be a summit and networking luncheon for all individuals and businesses that are currently engaged in or wish to become engaged in people-to-people exchange programs between the U.S. and Baltic States. The gala begins at 1800 with a reception and silent auction at the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel.

“For the first time in the history of USBF’s galas, we are dedicating all proceeds to a specific purpose – to establish a comprehensive process to expand and facilitate exchanges of students, scholars, mid-career professionals and others between the U.S. and the Baltic States. USBF has a long and successful history in trans-Atlantic exchanges starting in 1990 when it focused on areas including municipal governance, anti-corruption, high school students and non-profit managers. The 2008 gala will spotlight the Foundation’s dynamic new initiatives in this field,” said Ms. Ogrydziak.

In addition to President Ilves, the Gala will honor a select group of political, cultural and business leaders who have contributed to the development of the Baltic region. Previous gala honorees and distinguished guests have included Latvian President **Vaira Vike-Freiberga**, Lithuanian President **Valdas Adamkus**, Estonian President **Lennart Meri**, U.S. Secretary of State **Madeleine Albright**, National Security Advisor **Zbigniew Brzezinski**, philanthropist **Winthrop Rockefeller** and others.

USBF’s Executive Director Linas J. Kojelis and American Baltic Celebration Gala Chair Maria Kivisild Ogrydziak will be traveling to the Baltics to coordinate gala preparations with the U.S. Embassies and

USBF friends in each country. They will be in Tallinn on November 14, Riga on November 15, and Vilnius on November 16. Ms. Ogrydziak and Mr. Kojelis invite members of the media to attend a press briefing each morning at 0800 (8:00 am) in each capitol to learn more about gala and USBF's programs (contact Trevor Dane at USBF for more information).

The U.S.- Baltic Foundation (USBF) was established in 1990 to unite all Americans who supported the aspirations of the people of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania for democracy and independence and are dedicated to strengthening our trans-Atlantic ties with the Baltics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As is described on our website ([www.usbaltic.org](http://www.usbaltic.org)), in the 1990's USBF initiated a broad range of programs including municipal government development, training for independent media professionals and NGO development. As an advocate for closer U.S.- Baltic relations, USBF also initiated a broad range of cultural, government and public relations programs including a nationwide tour of Baltic modern art, our Ambassador's Council luncheons in the U.S. Capitol and development of the *Singing Revolution* documentary about Estonia's struggle for freedom (<http://www.singingrevolution.com>).

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