



UNITED STATES COMMISSION  
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF AMERICA'S HERITAGE ABROAD

July 29, 2015

Artūras Visockas  
Mayor of Šiauliai  
Vasario 16 -osios St. 62,  
LT 76295 Šiauliai  
Lithuania

Dear Mayor Visockas:

On behalf of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, I am writing to express my appreciation to you for preventing the excavation of a Holocaust-era mass grave in Šiauliai.

Jewish religious law forbids the disinterment of human remains. An excavation would have been a violation of human dignity. Thank you for ensuring, with swift and decisive action, that this did not occur. Your actions are consistent with the spirit of the 2002 bilateral agreement signed by our governments on the protection and preservation of certain cultural properties.

As a nation of immigrants, including Jewish Lithuanian émigrés (some who are Holocaust survivors) and their descendants, the United States has an interest in preserving sites in other countries associated with its citizens' heritage. As the U.S. law that created the Commission states, "the fabric of society is strengthened by visible reminders of [its] historical roots...it is in the national interest of the U.S. to encourage the preservation and protection of cemeteries, monuments, and historic buildings associated with the foreign heritage United States citizens."

We greatly appreciate your leadership and understanding on this important human rights and values issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lesley Weiss".

Lesley Weiss  
Chair

Cc: Minister of Culture Šarūnas Birutis  
Lithuania Commission on Jewish Culture and History Chair Alminas Mačiulis  
U.S. Ambassador Deborah A. McCarthy

Embassy of Lithuania Deputy Chief of Mission Mindaugas Žičkus  
Jewish Community of Lithuania Chair Faina Kukliansky