

The International Program – Croatia



A meeting with government officials from the Republic of Croatia and Judicial Watch's director of research and investigations, Chris Farrell, was arranged by the Academy for International Development (AED), under the auspices of the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program. "Combating Corruption in the United States" was the theme of this delegation's project. The educational goals of these delegates were, in part, to:

- Learn about methodologies used to investigate and prosecute financial crime and criminal activities associated with financial crime; and
- Examine collaborative efforts among various U.S. agencies to counter corruption and white-collar crime.

According to U.S. State Department [historical notes](#), the Croatians have been acquainted with war and subjugation since the time of their migration from Ukraine to Croatia in the 6th century up to the recent past. They came under the Hapsburgs' control by the mid-1400s until the demise of the Austro-Hungarian Empire following World War I. They united with the Serbs and Slovenes to form Yugoslavia in 1929; and after World War II they were united under communist leadership. When communism fell throughout Eastern Europe, so did the communist federation of Yugoslavia. Croatia eventually declared independence in 1990. A month later war erupted as a result of conflict between the Serbs and Croats.

Although the United Nations attempted to mediate peace agreements in the latter years, it wasn't until December 1995 that a permanent cease fire was negotiated with the signing of the Dayton peace agreement in December 1995. "Real progress" in terms of "regional cooperation, refugee returns, national reconciliation, and democratization" followed slowly. Today, under the leadership of Prime Minister

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Kosor, Croatia is “focused on tackling economic reform and corruption at home, while pushing to overcome the last remaining hurdles to Croatia’s EU accession.” And corruption has become a viable threat to Croatia’s democratization process.

The problem of corruption in government is one that Judicial Watch knows well, particularly the harmful effects it has on society in undermining the rule of law—the essential foundation for a free , just, and equitable society—and the negative impact it has on the economy of a nation.

The meeting with the Croatian government officials took place at Judicial Watch headquarters on November 18, 2010. Mr. Farrell was asked to provide the Croatian government officials with a “briefing about work done by Judicial Watch to ensure the transparency and accountability of government, particularly the processes of investigation.” Mr. Farrell discussed Judicial Watch’s educational mission and its conservative philosophy, stressing “principle over politics.” Judicial Watch’s track record of investigations against both Republicans and Democrats demonstrate that unethical or corrupt behavior by judges, politicians and elected or appointed government officials, not political ideology, informs its decision to investigate.

Discussed in greater detail were several of the investigations recently initiated through open records laws and, in particular, the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Mr. Farrell discussed Judicial Watch’s successful efforts in uncovering Senators [Barney Frank](#) and Christopher Dodd’s roles in the [Sallie Mae and Freddie Mac](#) debacle, which led to the housing market crash and financial meltdown. And although open records laws are the primary venue for discovery, he told the visitors that Judicial Watch has also taken on whistleblowers who have come forward to report incidents of corruption in government agencies. Two such cases dealt with whistleblowers from the [FBI](#) and the [State Department](#). Remarkably, in both instances, Judicial Watch was successful in helping the whistleblowers.

As set forth in its Mission Statement, “through its educational endeavors, Judicial Watch advocates high standards of ethics and morality in our nation’s public life and seeks to ensure that political and judicial officials do not abuse the powers entrusted to them by the American people. Judicial Watch fulfills its educational mission through litigation, investigations, and public outreach.” [The International Program](#) is an integral part of its educational program.