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NEWSLETTER

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COMMEMORATION OF THE DAY OF THE DEFENDERS OF FREEDOM 1991–2017

■ SEIMAS:

APPROVED THE PROGRAMME OF THE 17TH GOVERNMENT

APPROVED THE STATE BUDGET FOR 2017

POSTPONED FOR SIX MONTHS THE ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE NEW LABOUR CODE

ADOPTED A RESOLUTION ON STRENGTHENING OF PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY

CONGRATULATED THE ELECTED US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

MARKED THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF PRESIDENT KAZYS GRINIUS

- SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS MET WITH THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS LED BY REPUBLICAN SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN
- EU COMMISSIONER FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY PRESENTED THE 2016 STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS AND THE COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2017

PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS

Seimas approved the Programme of the 17th Government

On 13 December 2016, the Seimas approved the Programme of the 17th Government, which had been drawn up by the coalition of the Lithuanian Peasant and Greens Union and the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party and presented by Saulius Skvernelis, the appointed Prime Minister*. The respective resolution of the Seimas was passed by 86 votes in favour, with 3 votes against and 40 abstentions.

Once the Programme was approved by the majority of the Members present at the sitting, the new government received a mandate to act and shall, within three months, draw up and adopt specific measures for the implementation of the programme.

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* The programme of the 17th Government was presented to the Lithuanian Seimas on 6 December 2016. Please click [here](#) for more information.

On 13 December 2016, following the approval of the Government Programme, Members of the 17th Government were sworn in. Speaker of the Seimas, Viktoras Pranckietis, administered the oaths. Original oath sheets of the Government Members have been given over to the Speaker and will be stored at the Office of the Seimas. After the new Cabinet of Ministers took the oath, the previous 16th Government concluded its activities.



Seimas adopted a resolution on strengthening of parliamentary diplomacy

On 20 December 2016, the Seimas adopted a resolution on strengthening of parliamentary diplomacy. The total of 76 Members voted in favour, with none against and 3 abstentions.

The Resolution underlined the importance of parliamentary diplomacy and international relations of political parties in the current geopolitical context; called on the countries in the Baltic Sea region to strengthen their geopolitical cooperation; took note that Lithuania had to fully support the Eastern partnership countries in their pursuit of democratic reform.

Full text of the document please find [here](#).

Seimas congratulated the elected US President Donald Trump



On 22 December 2016, the Seimas congratulated the elected President of the United States of America Donald Trump by adopting a respective Resolution.

In the Resolution, the Seimas recognised the role of the United States of America in and the personal contribution of the President of this country to ensuring security and stability in Europe and throughout the world and noted the sincere long-term historical bonds between the people of Lithuania and of the United States of America.

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Vytenis Povilas Andriukaitis, EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, presented the 2016 State of the Union address and the Commission Work Programme 2017



On 1 December 2016, at the sitting of the Seimas, Vytenis Povilas Andriukaitis, EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, presented the 2016 State of the Union address, made by Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, and the Commission Work Programme for 2017. In his speech, Commissioner emphasised that all 28 EU capitals, national Parliaments and Governments decided on the kind of the European Union they wanted to see and live in. "I would thus like to see the deeply ingrained cliché phrase 'Brussels decided' changed. There is no such concept," he noted.

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Committee on Foreign Affairs: *offering the prospect of EU membership to aspiring Eastern Partnership countries must remain on the political agenda of EU institutions and Member States*

At its meeting of 7 December 2016, the Committee on Foreign Affairs, with the participation of representatives from the Ministry on Foreign Affairs, discussed the 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy published by the European Commission on 9 November 2016; the accompanying progress reports on the countries seeking EU membership (Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia, and Turkey) and the position of the Ministry on Foreign Affairs on these matters. The Committee adopted by consensus the opinion concerning the key aspects of the EU enlargement process.

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Committee on Foreign Affairs approved the proposal to form a Subcommittee on Transatlantic Relations and Democratic Development



At its meeting on 21 December 2016, the Committee on Foreign Affairs considered and approved by consensus the proposal to form a Subcommittee on Transatlantic Relations and Democratic Development. [Žygimantas Pavilionis](#) was nominated for the position of the Chair of the Subcommittee.

The main objective of the Subcommittee is to enhance the parliamentary ties between the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania and the Democracy Subcommittee (Democratic Caucus) of the Congress of the United States of America (U.S.), as well as among all parliamentary democracy groups of the entire Community of Democracies. On the basis of these groups, an international parliamentary dimension of the Community of Democracies is to be created in Washington DC on 13–15 September 2017. This decision would allow the Seimas to ensure regular contacts with the U.S. Congress and other parliamentary democracy groups, which will form a solid system of parliamentary cooperation for democracy starting from September 2017.

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Committee on European Affairs met with Members of the European Parliament elected in Lithuania

On 19 December 2016, members of the Committee on European Affairs of the Seimas met with the Members of the European Parliament elected in Lithuania. The meeting discussed the most relevant issues on the EU agenda and plans for further cooperation between the Committee on European Affairs and Members of the European Parliament from Lithuania. The meeting was also attended by Linas Linkevičius, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

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ADOPTED LAWS

Seimas approved the state budget for 2017

On 22 December 2016, with 77 votes in favour, 27 votes against and 14 abstentions, the Seimas adopted the Law on the Approval of the Financial Indicators of the State Budget and Municipal Budgets for 2017.

The revenue of the state budget, including EU and other international financial support, was set to increase by EUR 43 million, totalling EUR 8,519.3 million, while the appropriations for expenditure and acquisition of assets were set to be raised by around EUR 18 million, totalling EUR 9,077.8 million (the appropriations exceed the revenue by EUR 558.5 million).

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Seimas postponed for six months the entry into force of the new Labour Code

On 20 December 2016, the Seimas adopted amendments to the Labour Code* and accompanying legislation, thus postponing for half a year the entry into force of some of the laws adopted under the social model package, including the new Labour Code. The amendments mean that the laws under the social model package will enter into force on 1 July 2017. A total of 78 Members of the Seimas voted in favour of the proposal on the postponement, with 14 against and 30 abstentions.

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*The new Labour Code was adopted on 21 June 2016. Please click [here](#) for more information.

Seimas ratified the Convention on the European Forest Institute

On 8 December 2016, in accordance with the Constitution and in view of the Decree by Dalia Grybauskaitė, President of the Republic, the Seimas ratified the Convention on the European Forest Institute adopted in Joensuu on 28 August 2003. The explanatory note to the law indicates that the Republic of Lithuania will become a member of the European Forest Institute.

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Seimas restricted the possibility for tobacco producers and sellers to sponsor events

On 8 December 2016, the Seimas adopted amendments to the Law on Control of Tobacco, tobacco products and related products, which not only ban the promotion of purchase and/or consumption of tobacco and related products but also sponsorship in any form and by any means.

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Seimas increased the excise duty on alcohol

The Seimas adopted amendments to the Law on Excise Duty providing for an increase in the excise duty on alcohol as from 1 March 2017. Under the adopted amendments, beer is subject to an excise duty rate of EUR 3.36 for 1 percent of actual alcoholic strength by volume fixed per hectolitre of the product. At the moment, the excise duty on beer stands at EUR 3.36.

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Seimas allowed registration of right-hand drive vehicles in Lithuania from 2018

On 15 December 2016, the Seimas adopted amendments to the Law on Road Traffic Safety allowing the registration of motor vehicles designed for left-hand traffic and/or with the steering equipment on the right-hand side and their participation in road transport. These motor vehicles, however, are required to have certain measures ensuring traffic safety. The total of 95 Members voted in favour of the new provisions, with no against and 6 abstentions.

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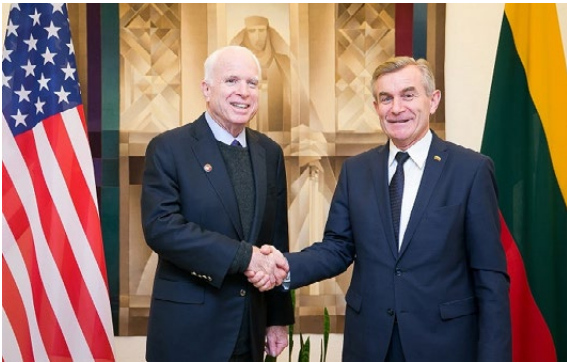
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Historic Meeting of the Seimas Delegation with Members of the US Congress in Washington

On 5–7 December 2016, a delegation of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, headed by Gediminas Kirkilas, Deputy Speaker of the Seimas, visited Washington, D.C. During the visit, Members of the Seimas, joined by members of the Estonian and Latvian parliamentary delegations, met with the leadership of the US Senate and Chairmen and Members of the Foreign Affairs Committees of both chambers of Congress, as well as the Senate Armed Services Committee. The widely representative joint high level meeting between US Senators and MPs from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia was a historic meeting aimed at further strengthening and deepening the transatlantic link and further developing interparliamentary cooperation.

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Speaker of the Seimas: *special attention of the US to the Baltic region translates into overall strategic partnership and guarantees our security*



On 29 December 2016, Viktoras Pranckietis, Speaker of the Seimas, met with the delegation of the United States Congress led by Republican Senator John McCain.

“Your special attention to the region and your assessment of emerging threats is particularly important for us today. Lithuania is firmly committed to increasing its defence spending. We are reliable partners, willing to work together to ensure security for all NATO countries. The US focus on the Baltic region translates into overall strategic

partnership and guarantees our security,” the Speaker of the Seimas said.

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Viktoras Pranckietis, Speaker of the Seimas, discussed bilateral and regional cooperation and national security issues with Latvian leaders



On 6 December 2016, the delegation headed by Speaker of the Seimas Viktoras Pranckietis met with the leaders of Latvia in Riga, where they discussed the preparation of Lithuania and Latvia for the Centenary celebration of the states to be held in 2018, security of the region, the Eastern Partnership, and nuclear safety issues.

“At the meeting with Latvian leaders, we discussed the issues that are most relevant to our countries. The ways to ensure full security of our region and resilience of critical

infrastructure to potential challenges were at the focus of our attention,” said the Speaker of the Seimas.

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Chair of the Committee on National Security and Defence: *the role of the UK in region’s defence should not diminish after Brexit*



On 14 December 2016, Vytautas Bakas, Chair of the Committee on National Security and Defence, along with other Committee members hosted a delegation from the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The parties exchanged their views on matters related to regional security and potential threats.

Having heard the Committee members, the UK’s representative, Sarah MacIntosh, stressed that the United Kingdom and Lithuania had shared a common

understanding about European security for many years. She assured the Committee members that the UK would be concerned with matters related to the Baltic countries when the UK left the EU.

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Leadership of the National Anticorruption Bureau of Ukraine attended a meeting of the Seimas Anticorruption Commission



On 15 December 2016, the leadership of the National Anticorruption Bureau of Ukraine (NABU) and anticorruption officers had a unique opportunity to attend a meeting of the Seimas Anticorruption Commission. The guests attended the meeting which focussed on the relevance of amendments to the Law on Charity and Sponsorship aimed at prohibiting the provision of any charity by state-owned companies.

In addition, Vitalijus Gailius, Chair of the Anticorruption Commission, described the areas of activity and working practice of the Commission. The Ukrainian guests presented the activities, challenges and achievements of the NABU.

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Eugenijus Jovaiša, Chair of the Committee on Education and Science, met with Amir Maimon, Ambassador of the State of Israel

On 22 December 2016, Eugenijus Jovaiša, Chair of the Seimas Committee on Education and Science, met with Amir Maimon, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Israel to the Republic of Lithuania. The meeting was also attended by Maly Danino, Executive Director of Nitzan, Israeli Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities, and founder of the Department of Psychological Assistance to Persons with Learning Disabilities under the Israeli Ministry of Education, and Anat Katznelson, Senior Psychologist at Nitzan, Director of the Parent Coaching Programme. The meeting participants highlighted the importance of further cooperation between Lithuania and Israel and considered the areas of further cooperation in the fields of education and science.

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EVENTS

Seimas marked the 150th Anniversary of the Birth of President Kazys Grinius



On 15 December 2016, in its solemn sitting, the Seimas commemorated the 150th anniversary of the birth of Kazys Grinius, President, Prime Minister, Member of the Constituent Seimas, the 1st and the 3rd Seimas and a publicist.

Mr Pranckietis, Speaker of the Seimas, noted that, while commemorating the 150th anniversary of the birth of Kazys Grinius, we remember him as a politician who showed to the public the benefits of the strong link between democracy and law, stating that this interaction is a tool that strengthens the State and contributes to its growth and development.

“We have to be grateful to President Grinius who created the history of our State being clearly aware of the political developments in the neighbouring countries and the rest of the world and recognising the contribution of each person, and strategically envisaged the outcome of his activities,” said the Speaker.

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Member of the Seimas Emanuelis Zingeris: *Propagation of the Soviet Regime Must Be Subject to Prosecution*



On 9 December 2016, Gunnar Hökmark, Member of the European Parliament, in cooperation with Emanuelis Zingeris, Member of the Lithuanian Seimas and President of the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy, organised a round-table discussion to mark the 25th anniversary of the Belovezh Accords at the European Parliament in Brussels.

“The collapse of the Soviet Union, the prison of nations, was one of the biggest positive transformations of the 20th century. The Bolshevik Soviet Empire created in 1917 disrupted the development of nations and personal

growth of individuals, set up a single-party dictatorial system, occupied the neighboring countries and transferred this ‘system of evil’ to their territories. Tens of millions of different-thinking people living in the USSR were subject to repressive actions by the repressive NKVD-KGB apparatus. In a course of the collapse of the USSR, Eastern Europe was liberated by democratic movements and joined the European Union. The Soviet communist dictatorship was not evaluated alike Nazi regime during Nurnberg process. All the attempts to restore or create an artificial nostalgia for the Soviet regime, including via mass media, goes against international law, in which official results of Belavezhs accords were broadly accepted. Russian organizations like Memorial, working on the evaluation of the Soviet crimes, should be firmly supported by the international community,” said Emanuelis Zingeris.

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PHOTOS



Viktoras Pranckietis, Speaker of the Seimas, watched the international exercise *Iron Sword 2016*.
2 December 2016



Members of the Seimas Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe met with the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe.
7 December 2016



Valerijus Simulik, Chair of the Committee on Human Rights, met with Amir Maimon, Ambassador of the State of Israel to Lithuania.
8 December 2016



Viktoras Prancietis, Speaker of the Seimas, received Wei Ruixing, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Lithuania.
9 December 2016



Viktoras Prancietis, Speaker of the Seimas, received Hasan Mamadzada, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Lithuania.
19 December 2016



Gediminas Kirkilas, Deputy Speaker of the Seimas, received David Noonan, Ambassador of the Republic of Ireland to Lithuania.
21 December 2016

For more photos of the December 2016 events and meetings, see [here](#).

TEXT

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