

## Englische Version

Dear Mr. Ambassador, dear Mr. Emerson,

The county of Passau, the employees of this house and the people living here are proud and honored to welcome you and your lovely wife here today.

I also give a warm welcome to Mr. Consul General Bill Moeller, who already visited us last year. Dear Mr. Consul General, it is a pleasure to have you and your charming wife here today.

Allow me, due to the long guest list, to welcome representatively some personalities, who as we all, look forward to exchange some thoughts with you.

I greet Christian Flisek, member of the German Bundestag.

I welcome Walter Taubeneder, member of the Bavarian Landtag, who a couple of days ago came back from a visit to the United States. On his journey amongst others he also met Florida's Minister of Agriculture.

Also I greet Dr. Klaus Rose, retired parliamentary state secretary and member of the German Bundestag, and Max Brandl, vice president of the district assembly of Lower Bavaria.

A warm welcome as well goes to my deputies Raimund Kneidinger, Gerlinde Kaupa and Klaus Froschhammer.

Among us are also Richard Hettmann and Karl-Heinz Moser, vice-presidents of the Chamber of Crafts, and Christian Hatz, vice-president of the Chamber of Industry and Trade with CEO Walter Keilbart.

It is a great honor for me to give a welcome to Gerd Sonnleitner, ambassador of the United Nations for traditional farming and honorary president of the German farmer's union.

I also greet the members of the County Council Fractions.

A special thank goes to the musicians of our county music school, to the representatives of the media and to Lt. Susanne Windpassinger from the helicopter wing Laupheim for the translations.

A very warm welcome goes to Konrad Kobler, retired member of the Bavarian Landtag and district chairman of the Europa-Union. He is the one who organized our meeting today and will also talk to us later on.

Dear Konrad, I thank you for your efforts making this important meeting possible for the County of Passau. The visit of the highest diplomatic representative of the United States of America in Germany is a great pleasure for us, because we know that today friends are visiting friends.

Dear Mr. Ambassador,

Your visit is a symbol for this friendship and we appreciate that a lot.

And that you receive an impression of where you are today, allow me to give just a few facts of the County of Passau.

Almost having 190'000 citizens makes us Bavaria's fifth biggest County. Based on the area we reach the third position.

After an unprecedented upward trend in the last couple decades we have a historical low unemployment rate and are one of the economical leaders in the upcoming area of Lower Bavaria. In this administrative region we are with 4.7 Million stays also the number one tourism area.

But as pictures are worth a thousand words, a short movie will know show you our County. I hope you get an impression of why I always – and at all time without contradiction – call it the most beautiful county of Bavaria.

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USA and Bavaria, this close alliance can of course be described with hard data.

There are deep historical roots, connections between our ancestors, our shared convictions of democracy and freedom and of course the fact, that the United States are today the most important trading partner of Bavaria.

But among all these facts, emotions are an indicator of friendship. This personal bond characterizes your visit today.

What makes good friends?

For sure it's hospitality, which I myself got to know a few weeks ago during a visit to Washington, where my son spent a semester.

This hospitality on both sides is also a trademark for the student exchange programs, in which the county schools take part with great commitment.

Of course the leading role of the USA as a trading partner reflects in our economical live. The members of the economical chambers can confirm that and will be glad to receive suggestions today to strengthen this relationship.

How far the resent topic of the Transatlantic Free Trade Agreement will affect our region is of course also very important for us.

But the Bavarian counties and cities agree that the local independence has to remain unaffected, especially the public supply in healthcare or water management.

Friend can frankly discuss about such things and I know that especially you do that with great transparency.

Dear Mr. Ambassador, you see: we are all being curious about you.

Before Konrad Kobler takes over, please allow me to give you and your wife as well of course you, Mr. Consul General and your wife some presents to welcome you here. These should remind you of your visit here in the County of Passau.

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Dear Mr. Ambassador, thank you very much for your address. Would you now please make an entry in the Golden Book of the County of Passau.