



# ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA

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## ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY WELCOMES KNOLLENBERG IN CALIFORNIA

Beverly Hills, CA – The Armenian Assembly’s Western Region Office held a dinner in honor of Representative Joseph Knollenberg (R-MI), Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues, in Glendale, California on August 29.

Nearly 30 Assembly supporters and local community leaders, including Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian former Primate of the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church, Very Rev. Father Dajad Yardemian representing Archbishop Hovnan Derderian of the Western Diocese and Harutyun Kojoyan, Deputy Consul General of the Republic of Armenia, attended the event at the Glendale Hilton Hotel.

Board of Trustees Member and Western Office Chairman Richard Mushegain, who hosted the dinner with his wife Lauren, thanked Knollenberg for his unwavering support of Armenia and Armenian-American issues during his 14-year tenure in the House of Representatives.

“Tonight I am pleased to welcome Congressman Knollenberg and his wife Sandie to this gathering of representatives of the Armenian Assembly community in Los Angeles,” said Mushegain.

Knollenberg, in his remarks, commended the Armenian Assembly and its leadership for its work to strengthen the U.S.-Armenia and U.S.-Karabakh relationships. He said he was pleased to report that Washington’s support for Armenia continues to gain strength and pointed to the recent signing of a five-year \$235 million compact between Armenia and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) as a positive sign.

However, Knollenberg added that Armenia must continue on the path of reform, stressing the importance of good governance, economic development and sound social policy as a requisite for continued MCC funding. The government grant program, which operates independently of USAID, focuses on long-term growth and reassesses a country every year with the expectation of improved performance.

As Subcommittee Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, Knollenberg has consistently worked to ensure robust U.S. economic assistance to Armenia and humanitarian aid to Karabakh. He told event participants that despite Armenia’s MCC grant, foreign operations funding continues to be necessary to Armenia’s development and that he will work to maintain assistance levels in Congress.

Knollenberg also provided an update on the South Caucasus Integration and Open Railroads Act – a bill he introduced in the House of Representatives last year along with fellow Armenian Caucus Co-Chair Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) and Caucus Member George Radanovich (R-CA). Knollenberg said the bill, which would prohibit U.S. assistance for the promotion or development of a railroad that would connect Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan while bypassing Armenia, currently has 96 supporters. He expressed optimism that the bill would pass the House and urged activists to increase their advocacy on the Senate side.

The Armenian Assembly of America is the largest Washington-based nationwide organization promoting public understanding and awareness of Armenian issues. It is a 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt membership organization.

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**Photographs:**



**Caption:** Board of Trustees Member and Western Office Chairman Richard Mushegain presented Congressman Joseph Knollenberg (R-MI) with a book about Armenia.



**Caption:** L to R: Congressman Joseph Knollenberg (R-MI) with Fellow Trustees Nora Hampar, Savey Tufenkian and Flora Dunaians and Life Trustee Grace Kay.