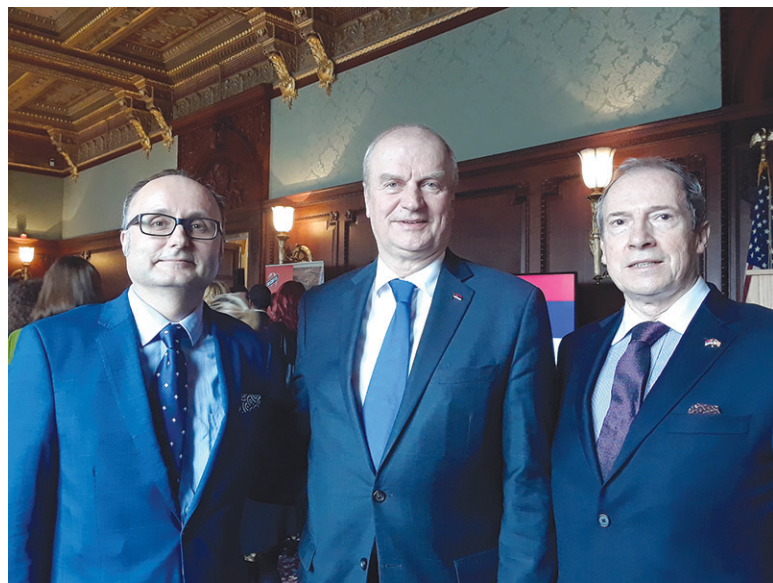


SNF OPERATIONS STATUS, SEE PAGE 4



CELEBRATION AT LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

National Day of the Republic of Serbia

From left, Milos Rastovic, Cultural Outreach Coordinator of the SNF, H.E. Djerdj Matkovic, Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to the USA, and Djordje Jovanovic, Vice President of the Serbian National Defense Council of America for Eastern America

by Milos Rastovic

WASHINGTON, DC – On February 11th, a celebration of the National Day of the Republic of Serbia took place at the Library of Congress, sponsored by the Embassy of the Republic of Serbia, in cooperation with the Co-Chairs of the Serbian Congressional Caucus, the Honorable Steve Stivers, and the Honorable Emanuel Cleaver II.

The Republic of Serbia celebrates February 15th as an official Statehood Day, as both the beginning of the First Serbian Uprising against the Ottoman Empire took place in Orasac on that date in 1804, and the founding of the Candelmas or “Sretenje” Constitution in Kragujevac in 1835.

The event began with the singing of both Serbian and American anthems. At the opening of the ceremony, guests were welcomed by H.E. Mr. Djerdj Matkovic, Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to the United States. He praised Serbian achievements in politics,

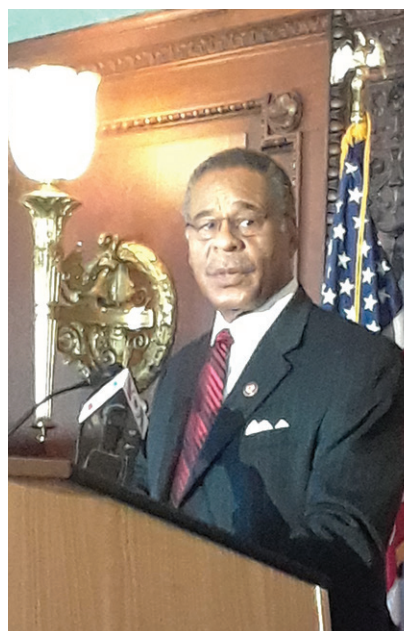
economy, science, culture and other fields of cooperation with the United States. The Honorable Emanuel Cleaver II spoke kindly of his experience with Serbian people and food in his Congressional District in Missouri.

Luis E. Borunda, Deputy Secretary of State Maryland, said, “...the people of Maryland join together in appreciation of the mutual respect, admiration and friendship our great countries,” as he conferred the Governor’s Citation to Ambassador Matkovic.

Philip T. Reeker, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs at U.S. State Department of State, emphasized the previous and current relationships between the United States and Serbia.

All guests at this wonderful reception had a chance to socialize while enjoying Serbian food.

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The Honorable Emanuel Cleaver II



Luis E. Borunda, Deputy Secretary of State Maryland

CLEVELAND’S SERBIAN HERITAGE NIGHT



Nikola Jokic with Serbian fans and Morava dancers



Morava performing in the Quicken Loan Arena



Dancers holding the American Flag

continued on page 11

CLEVELAND'S SERBIAN HERITAGE NIGHT

continued from page 1

by Milos Rastovic

CLEVELAND, OH – During the NBA game between the Denver Nuggets and the Cleveland Cavaliers on March 7, the Serb National Federation sponsored Serbian Heritage Night dedicated to Nuggets player Nikola Jokic, who is also on the Serbian National Team.

Over 600 Serbian fans came from Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Illinois to support Jokic. They wore scarves with Serbian flags and logos. Serbian fans were led by “cheerleader” SNF President Dane A. Medich, loudly cheering. When Jokic saw the Serbian fans, his heart was so intense that he immediately ran off the court to meet the audience. The expression on his face was one of extraordinary happiness that overwhelmed him. He met his fans, and most of all, the youngest members of the Cleveland-based Serbian folklore group “Morava,” who were bearing the inscription “We do not give our sanctities” in support of the defense of Serbian sanctities in fraternal Montenegro.

The excitement that Jokic had with his fans was immeasurable. The stadium boomed “Nikola, Nikola” and “Serbia, Serbia.” The echo spread to the American audience. Jokic’s and the heart of the Serbian fans were filled with joy, which was memorialized in photographs.

Before the game, “Morava” inundated the court by performing traditional Serbian folklore dance. The audience delighted in the rhythm of the Serbian music. The folklore group showed all the splendor and richness of Serbian cultural heritage that the American audience rewarded with thunderous applause. The American flag was carried by members of the Serbian folklore group for the singing of the national anthem. By holding the American flag, the Serbian-American Diaspora in the United States displayed their great loyalty to their new homeland as well as friendship between the Serbian and American people.

Although the Denver Nuggets lost the match, it had little impact on Jokic and the Serbian fans. Jokic



The youngest members of Morava before the performance



“Morava” during the performance

pointed out that tomorrow is a new game, saying “Let’s move on.”

Reportedly, the host Cavaliers were surprised by the whole event and the number of visitors which they had not had at their stadium for a long time. We hope that this tradition of supporting our basketball players and the magnificent performances of Serbian culture will continue and be enhanced in the future.

After the game, I had the opportunity to ask Jokic a couple of questions. On behalf of the Serb National Federation, I presented him with a copy of the American Srbobran and the movie “Tesla Nation” by Zeljko Mirkovic, which is dedicated to Serbs in America. Jokic enthusiastically accepted the gifts and genuinely thanked me.

MR - How do you feel about your role as Serbia’s main Sports Ambassador to the United States?

NJ - It’s a nice feeling that people, especially Serbian people, recognize you when they come to watch the games because of you. I have the honor and respect for all of these people, and it makes me give my best. It’s always nice to play in front of our people.

MR - The Serb National Federation, the oldest Serbian-American Fraternal organization in the United States, dedicated the Serbian Heritage Night to you. What kind of emotions and insights do you bring playing from one game to another throughout the United States when you encounter the Serbian-American Diaspora?

NJ - My experience with the Serbian Diaspora is small. When we have matches, we do not spend more than a day in that city. We arrive at 5 or 6 p.m. and go out for dinner. There is certainly very little time. I had a couple of friends from Sombor, Serbia, in Chicago and Toronto last year and the year before, but they returned to Sombor. In most cases, I see the city in this way and meet some of our people. Basically, I don’t have time to visit the Serbian communities.

MR - At the elementary school, “Dositej Obradovic,” which you attended in Sombor, Serbia, there is a mural with your image. What would you like for children to learn from you and what would be your advice?

NJ - My advice would be that they enjoy what they do and that it gives them happiness and satisfaction. If the children think that they will make something out of it or make money, they should not think about it. Children should play and be happy.

MR - What is your message to young Serbs in America working to preserve Serbian ethnic identity?

NJ - I do not know that they do because of the majority of the children of our people do not speak Serbian. Of course, it is normal that children would use the English language more than ours because of the environment in which they live. It is not easy for our people to overcome their struggles. The majority came “truhom za kruhom” (seeking ones fortune), while they try to preserve our traditions such as Christmas and Patron Saints Day.



Nikola Jokic with and Milos Rastovic



Jokic’s mural at his Sombor elementary school



Jokic giving autographs