For Immediate Release

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Latvia's 108th Independence Anniversary Celebration at City Hall

Wisconsin Latvian Cultural Foundation brings together community leaders, musicians, dancers, and families to celebrate Latvian heritage and freedom

MILWAUKEE, WI — The Wisconsin Latvian Cultural Foundation will host its annual Latvian Independence Day celebration on Saturday, November 14, 2026, at Milwaukee City Hall, commemorating the 108th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Latvia.

The celebration honors Latvia's declaration of independence on November 18, 1918, and recognizes the resilience of the Latvian people, who endured decades of Soviet occupation before regaining their nation's independence in 1991.

Milwaukee Alderman Peter Burgelis, who serves as chairman of the Wisconsin Latvian Cultural Foundation, will welcome attendees to the celebration.

"For generations, Wisconsin's Latvian community has worked to preserve our language, culture, and traditions while contributing to the communities we call home," said Burgelis. "As a first-generation American whose family fled Soviet occupation, this celebration is deeply personal. It reminds us that freedom and democracy are never guaranteed and that preserving our heritage is both a responsibility and a privilege."

This year's keynote address will be delivered by Dr. Jeffrey W. Sommers, Professor of Political Economy and Public Policy at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. A four-time Fulbright Scholar with extensive experience in Central and Eastern Europe, Sommers previously served as visiting faculty at the Stockholm School of Economics in Riga and has advised government leaders and international institutions.

The program will also feature greetings from Latvian President Edgars Rinkēvičs, an invocation by Pastor Gundars Bērziņš, and recognition of community members through awards and acknowledgments.

Musical performances will be presented by the Milwaukee Combined Brusubārda–Dzimtene Choir, directed by Ernests Brusubārdis III. The choir's selections include traditional Latvian songs and the powerful patriotic composition Saule, Pērkons, Daugava.

The Milwaukee Latvian Folk Dance Group "Metieniņš," directed by Astrida Kaugars, will perform traditional dances celebrating Latvia's rich cultural heritage.

The ceremony will include the national anthems of the United States and Latvia, reflecting the community's enduring connection to its ancestral homeland and its pride in being American.

"Latvian independence is a story of perseverance, sacrifice, and the determination of a people to govern themselves," Burgelis added. "At a time when freedom and national sovereignty remain under threat around the world, including in Ukraine, Latvia's history carries an especially important message. We are proud to share that story with Milwaukee."

The Wisconsin Latvian Cultural Foundation has supported Latvian cultural preservation, education, scholarships, and community programming for generations. Its annual Independence Day celebration brings together Latvian Americans, families, community organizations, and friends of Latvia to honor the nation's history and celebrate its future.

Event Details

What: Latvia's 108th Independence Anniversary Celebration
When: Saturday, November 14, 2026
Where: Milwaukee City Hall, 200 E. Wells Street, Milwaukee, WI
Organizer: Wisconsin Latvian Cultural Foundation
Featured Speaker: Dr. Jeffrey W. Sommers, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee

About the Wisconsin Latvian Cultural Foundation

The Wisconsin Latvian Cultural Foundation is dedicated to preserving and promoting Latvian language, culture, heritage, and traditions through educational programs, scholarships, cultural events, and community engagement.

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