**Speech Gala-Buffet**

Dear Consul General, Mr. Hubler,
Dear President of the Federation of German-American Clubs, Mr. Bautell, and all Board Members
Dear Member of the Bundestag, Herr Klein,
Dear Member of the Landtag, Frau Wagener,
Dear Deputy Major of Siegen, Frau Floren,
Dear Chancellor of the University Siegen, Herr Dr. Richter,
Dear President of the Chamber of Commerce Siegen, Herr Vetter,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of our local German-American Association Siegerland-Wittgenstein - our Board, as well as our members - we are delighted and feel honoured to have such distinguished guests from all walks of life and from all around Germany and the USA. Our Association welcomes you here in Siegerland-Wittgenstein. We very much appreciate all of you being here and being able to join this Convention, and especially this Evening.

It truly is a privilege for us to be your hosts and to be able to say: “at least for this weekend our Siegerland-Wittgenstein area is the **Center of German-American Friendship in Germany**”. And I’m sure this is reason why the Ministerpresident of our Federal State Northrine Westfalia, Mrs. Hannelore Kraft andthe American Ambassador in Germany, Mr. John Emerson, have gladly accepted to take this Convention under their patronage.

Let me briefly point out why I’m particularly happy that the 67th Convention takes place in Siegen, why Siegen was chosen host city. In the long history of the Federation of German-American Clubs, it’s the first time that the convention takes place here. For the longest time the Federation hadn’t had any opportunity of finding local partners, since our club had its 10th birthday last month, on the 19th of April, thus making us one of the youngest clubs in Germany, maybe even the youngest? I’m certain this fact must have been considered in the decision to come here. So, Mr. Bautell, thank you very much for paying tribute to your federation’s “*growing children*” like us.

But I’d like to add another point: this event fits nicely to Tuesday the week before last, when you, Mr. Consul General, visited Siegen for a whole day, meeting and exchanging ideas with students from the academic high school “EVAU”, exchanging views with local politicians, and discussing T-TIP issues with businessmen, whose companies do business with the USA. **This** - I believe – has enhanced the mutual communication, understanding, and friendly ties between our two peoples.
This convention is another perfect example of an event that has also improved the mutual understanding between the USA and Germany. Much time this morning was devoted (*wisely I’d like to add*) to issues revolving around expanding our student exchange program. And in many areas there have been interesting impulses to revitalize shared aims in our transatlantic relationship. “Siegen” - translated into English means “to win”. I’m convinced these new impulses will translate into exactly that. “Der Name ist Programm!”

Talking about successful relationships. I’m sure, also one reason why this convention takes place in Siegen - is our long-time relationship with the US descendants of the Siegen-Wittgenstein emigrants. This year marks the 300th anniversary of the landing of the first emigrants from our Siegen-Wittgenstein area in Culpeper, Virginia. In early 1714 they arrived at Fort Germanna. Today, the descendents of these emigrants are organized in the Germanna Foundation. One of the main emphases of our club is to keep up and cherish good relations with these descendents. In a few weeks from now, a delegation of 31 members of our club will visit the Anniversary Celebrations in Virginia. We’ll meet our American friends again and will deepen this cross-cultural friendship. By the way, every year we receive a delegation of our friends; for them it’s their way or getting in touch with their ancestors.

And lastly, to finish my speech, I’d like to refer to today’s day: the 24th of May. (Please excuse the fact that I’m teacher for the subject “political science”.) On this day in 1949, Germany celebrated the first day of the ratified new “Grundgesetz”. Without the support of the United States this new Basic Law would have become reality. To me this is the core of German - American friendship. This friendship is based on common experiences, values, ​​and interests, as we can experience again with the Ukraine Crisis in full swing.

The current disturbances in the relationship will never change the basic common values. Both countries stand for individual freedom, but also for constitutional control and participation. We pursue the goals of freedom and democracy. These concepts will – in the long run – “Siegen”.

Let’s have a pleasant Celebration of lively talks among friends…

Let’s celebrate the German-American friendship tonight.