

Oklahoma: Oklahoma City

It was a cold Monday morning in Oklahoma City! April just started and Easter was passing by. For many in the State of Oklahoma a memorable day. Not because it was Easter Monday, but because all schools were closed! Oklahoma teachers just walked out on their government. They all gathered around the Oklahoma State Capitol rallying for more education funding. A historical moment for the Okie State which will go on for another eight days. For others, it was the start of the Oklahoma Consular Summit. Governor Mary Fallin welcomed diplomatic representatives from 10 countries to Oklahoma for a two-day Consular Summit on economic development opportunities. Hosted by the Oklahoma Governor's International Team and sponsored by the Oklahoma Business Roundtable, the representatives met with the Governor at the Governor's mansion. The Swiss Consul General Peter Zimmerli was among the visitors, participating in several other events that day. He is representing Switzerland's interests in Atlanta providing services to eleven states from North Carolina to Florida and from Texas to Tennessee. His jurisdiction naturally includes Oklahoma which gave him the opportunity to also visit with the local Honorary Consul Rico Buchli. In the last 15 years, Oklahoma became a rising State generating a lot of economic interest. Today, Swiss companies create around 5000 jobs in Oklahoma and are the 4th largest employer of foreign affiliates. Oklahoma exports around \$10 M of goods to Switzerland and imports \$70 M of goods from Switzerland. There are nearly 20 Swiss companies located in Oklahoma. More astonishing, there are about 6,000 Oklahoma residents of Swiss descent. Don't be surprised to run into a Swiss in Oklahoma!

After an informative two-day Summit, Consul General Zimmerli extended his stay to learn more about Oklahoma. He visited several historic, cultural, and outdoor attractions, including the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum, the Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, the Centennial Land Run Monument, and of course had a short encounter with part of the legendary Route 66. In addition, the CG also traveled to Stillwater to visit with Randy Kluver, the Dean of the School of Global Studies and Partnerships at Oklahoma State University. Not only learning about "Pistol Pete" and touring the Boone Pickens Stadium through the Athletics department, his OSU visit also covered the Spears School of Business and the Wes Watkins Center learning more about their programs.

Of course, a visit to the Oklahoma Swiss Club in Tulsa was part of his itinerary which is a must for every Swiss Representative visiting Oklahoma. But a courtesy visit with the Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum was first on the program, exchanging pleasantries followed by a round of interesting remarks about upcoming economic developments in Tulsa and the advantages of the Swiss Apprenticeship Model applied to Oklahoma. At last, hosted by the Siegenthaler family at their lovely home in Broken Arrow, the Oklahoma Swiss greeted their new Consul General with great excitement. Peter Zimmerli responded with a toast, thanking the guests for attending and providing such a delightful reception. A dinner on the 31st floor of "The Summit Club" with panoramic view to the Arkansas River to the west and the Osage Hills to the north concluded his Oklahoma visit.

The international dignitaries included, from left, Ambassador Jose Arturo Rodriguez Diaz of Guatemala; Consul General Peter McGauran of Australia; Consul General Vasken Khabayan of Canada; Consul General Alexis Andres of France; Consul General Thomas Meister of Germany; Consul General Ioannis Stamatekos of Greece; Consul General Adrian Farrell of Ireland; Consul General Hyung Gil Kim of South Korea; Consul Rodolfo Quilantan Arenas of Mexico; and Consul General Peter Zimmerli of Switzerland and Mary Fallin, Governor of Oklahoma.






Visit with Tulsa Mayor, from left, Cathy Render (Tulsa Global Alliance), André Siegenthaler (Swiss Club President), G.T. Bynum (Mayor of Tulsa), Peter Zimmerli (Consul General), Rico Buchli (Honorary Consul of Switzerland in Oklahoma).



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