

# TuesdayMorning

## TRANSATLANTIC LEGISLATORS DIALOGUE

# Idea exchange touted

*EU legislators meet with U.S. counterparts*

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European and U.S. legislators got a new perspective on Las Vegas over the weekend, one that gave them hardly any time to see the attractions that give Sin City its reputation.

Instead, they were immersed in serious policy discussions as participants in the Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue, a meeting of members of the U.S. Congress and the European Parliament, which came to Nevada for the first time in the 30-plus years of its history thanks to the efforts of Rep. Shelley Berkley, D-Nev.

Berkley is the current U.S. co-chair of the group. At a news conference Monday, she and European co-chair Jonathan Evans talked about the upshot of the weekend's discussions, which were closed to the public. Evans is a parliamentarian from Wales.

Evans said the biggest accomplishment of the program is that it keeps Europe and America talking to one another.

"We jointly face so many challenges, and yet there are so many mutual interests," he said.

One major issue the 22 Europeans and nine Americans discussed was how to improve toy and other product safety standards.

"With the growth of industry in China and India, a huge amount of that trade affects the United States and the EU," said U.S. Rep. Cliff Stearns, R-Fla. Comparing and standardizing safety requirements between the two could lead to heightened effectiveness, he said.

The two bodies looked for possibilities to compromise on issues such as proposed U.S. legislation that would require every container shipped into the country to be electronically scanned. The Europeans understand and share U.S. concerns with security and terrorism, Evans said, but such a require-



Jonathan Evans and Shelley Berkley, co-chairs of the Transatlantic Legislators Dialogue, answer questions Monday at the Rio after the weekend meeting of the group dedicated to international cooperation. The Nevada Democratic congresswoman and Wales parliamentarian discussed topics of their sessions.

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ment is "totally unworkable" for economic reasons.

"Clearly, we should try to develop technology to better enable us to assess what is in all those containers," he said. "But if it (the legislation) were imposed, it would have such a dire effect on our international trade."

A conference session on the Middle East was led by Dennis Ross, a respected former peace envoy to the region during the administrations of Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush. Iran was a focus of the discussion, Berkley said.

"While we all agree on the need to continue to engage Iran diplomatically and we are all on the same page when it comes to economic sanctions, there are differences in terms of how to impose those sanctions and the strength of those

sanctions," Berkley said.

"There are also discussions about military options on the table and off the table," she added. "Iran continues to be a major issue for both the United States and the member nations of the European Union."

Evans said the Europeans didn't want to see some of their companies penalized by third-party U.S. sanctions without advance consultation.

"We absolutely share with the United States the determination that Iran should not become a nuclear state," he said.

Other sessions over the weekend focused on anti-Semitism and global warming. The legislators also toured Nellis Air Force Base and were briefed on the proposed nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain. It all left little time

to see the Vegas that attracts millions of tourists, said U.S. Rep. Eliot Engel, D-N.Y.

"She (Berkley) worked us very hard," he said. "We had to stay up until 2 or 3 in the morning to participate in some of the famous activities here."

Berkley said the highlight for her was hosting a dinner for the group at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, her alma mater, where students performed for the group.

"People will be going back to their respective states and countries with a deeper understanding of Las Vegas and the remarkable community we have here," she said.

The Las Vegas meeting was the 63rd session of the group, which meets twice a year, once in the United States and once in Europe. It is scheduled to meet next in May in Slovenia.