

Joint Negro Appeal, a self-help organization that was organized by such individuals as Truman Gibson and Judge Odas Nicholson.

As president, Mr. McGee served diligently for more than 17 years and raised thousands of dollars to help such organizations as the Beatrice Caffey Youth Service League, the Good Shepherd Neighborhood Club, and other organizations.

After he retired from the postal service, Mr. McGee still found time to give of himself and his talents, as Mayor Richard J. Daley appointed him to a 5-year term on the Chicago Board of Education. It was an opportunity for him to give back to Chicago and, more importantly, give back to the next generation, our children.

The legacy that Mr. McGee leaves behind is both inspirational and impressive. I am so pleased that the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RUSH) has determined to name a post office in his honor.

I ask that all of America join me in paying tribute to the life and legacy of Henry McGee, and may his loved ones be comforted in knowing this his life touched thousands of citizens throughout not only Chicago but, indeed, throughout America. He lived a great and inspirational life.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NORWOOD addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXPLOSION AT PHILLIPS PETROLEUM PLANT IN PASADENA, TX

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight with a great deal of sorrow and concern because yesterday an explosion and fire occurred at Phillips Petroleum Company plant in Pasadena, Texas, which is part of the district that I represent. This tragedy resulted in the death of one worker and the injury of 71 others.

According to the Houston Chronicle, at least three of the injured were listed in critical condition, and six were listed in serious condition. Our thoughts and our prayers are with the men and women of the Phillips plant and their families.

The cause of this accident has not been determined. In fact, just today were they allowed to go back into the plant except for the suppression personnel.

About 850 Phillips employees and about 100 subcontractors work at the Pasadena plant complex. Phillips Petroleum officials said about 600 workers were on duty when the explosion occurred yesterday afternoon about 1 p.m.

As a result of the fire and smoke, 23 campuses in the Pasadena Independent School District and 8 campuses in the Galena Park Independent School District were forced to turn off their air conditioning and close their doors and windows and keep the children inside.

According to Phillips, the chemicals that burned in the fire could irritate one's eyes and nose and throat if inhaled in high concentrations, but the air monitors that were around the plant and in the community found no signs that anyone outside the plant was exposed to these toxic chemicals.

The explosion occurred in the section of the Phillips plant that produces K-Resin. K-Resin is the chemical used to make cups, lids, toys, shower doors, coat hangers, and clear packaging materials, such as shrink wrap that we wrap our groceries in and leftovers, bread wrappers, bottles for drinking water, clear boxes and trays.

I have visited the Phillips plant on several occasions and have met numerous times, not only with the management, but with the employees who are represented by PACE, the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers, International Union, formally, known as the OCAW.

I have also attended annual events, including the annual memorial that both the industry and the union plan every year in tribute to workers who have lost their lives in workplace accidents.

The work of the chemical plant is dangerous. The employees who work at the Phillips plant and the many others along the Houston Ship Channel know the impact an explosion can make.

That is why we need stronger worker protections. We cannot prevent every accident, but we can ensure that every worker has a reasonable expectation that he or she will be safe.

The Phillips Petroleum plant has a long history of accidents that have resulted in facilities and many safety violations. We hope that again we learn from our experiences.

In the last year, this facility has experienced three other explosions. The worst of these occurred last June and resulted in the death of two employees. The other two explosions occurred in August and April of last year.

By far the deadliest year for Phillips Petroleum was in 1989. On October 23, 1989, an explosion resulted in 23 deaths and 130 injuries. A few months before this explosion, six employees were injured when a natural gas pipeline near the plant's boiler room exploded. Two of the injured workers later died of their injuries.

Producing the products that our Nation and our world require is inherently dangerous. It is important that OSHA inspectors move quickly to investigate the cause of this most recent explosion. We need to do everything we can to ensure that accidents like this will never happen again.

In closing, our prayers are for the speedy recovery for those injured and

also for the loss of that one life. The loss of one life is one too many.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my special order this evening.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise proudly to celebrate Greek Independence Day, an event which marks the symbolic rebirth of democracy.

On March 25, 1821, Archbishop Germanos of Patras raised the flag of freedom and was the first to declare Greece free. We honor the valiant Greek freedom fighters who began an arduous struggle to win independence for Greece and its people 179 years ago.

Although many Greeks died, they were undeterred from their ultimate goal. "Eleftheria I Thanatos," liberty or death, became the Greek patriots' battle cry, a cry all too familiar to us because of the similar pronouncement of Patrick Henry, who said "Give me liberty or give me death."

One particular story best signifies the spirit which existed then. A significant wave of rebellion against Turkish oppression was ignited by the fiercely patriotic Suliotes villagers who took refuge from Turkish authorities in the mountains of Epiros.

□ 1715

When the Suliotes women, left alone, learned that Turkish troops were fast approaching their village, they began to dance the "Syrtos," a patriotic Greek dance. One by one they committed suicide by throwing themselves and their children off Mount Zalongo. They chose to die rather than surrender and face slavery.

When news of the revolution arrived in the United States after the initial uprising, there were widespread feelings of compassion. This sentiment was shared by several American presidents, including James Monroe and John Quincy Adams. Each conveyed his support for the revolution through his annual messages to Congress.

William Harrison, our ninth president, expressed his belief in freedom for Greece, saying, and I quote him, "We must send our free will offering. The Star-Spangled Banner," he went on to say, "must wave in the Aegean, a message of fraternity and friendship to Greece."

So we should not overlook the fact that American leaders have always

been drawn to Greece's democratic ideals. In drafting our constitution, American colonial leaders cited Greek and Roman sources. The very basis of our constitution derives from Aristotle and was put into practice in ancient Rome. As Thomas Jefferson once said, "To the ancient Greeks we are all indebted for the light which led ourselves, American colonists, out of Gothic darkness."

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS).

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me. Every year the gentleman faithfully executes his special order for remembrance of March 25 and what it means to Americans of Greek descent.

The recollections I have as a young person in attending the Greek Orthodox church in my community was that this particular holiday was a blend of two momentous events in the life of a Greek Orthodox Christian. One was the Celebration of the Annunciation and, at the same time, the ethnic revolutionary epic of the revolution to which the gentleman has referred. This blending of both faith and nationalism has made this particular holiday very distinct and very unusual. And it evokes memories not only of those two events simultaneously occurring but the fact that they helped us, those young Americans of Greek descent, recognize the value of being Americans.

We, as Americans, were able to see that democracy's home, Greece, had an inexorable link with the founding of our country, our United States, and continues to have this absolutely wonderful bond between the democracies that we both cherish.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for always joining me year after year after year in this special order.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that the price of liberty can be very high, hundreds of thousands of lives. Socrates, Plato, Pericles, and many other great scholars throughout history warned we maintain democracy only at great cost. The freedom we enjoy today is due to a large degree to the sacrifices made by men and women in the past, in Greece, in America, and all over the world.

Unfortunately, there are several countries where the struggle for freedom continues, and tensions persist in the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo, the Middle East, Africa, Greece, and Turkey, and particularly in the Republic of Cyprus. Turkey still illegally occupies a large part of Cyprus, as it has since its brutal invasion in 1974. The United States has exerted its influence to improve chances for peace in the Middle East and Northern Ireland. Now it is time for the U.S. to promote a fair solution for Cyprus.

Turkey continues to refute U.N. resolutions on Cyprus. Our Nation has the influence to encourage to Turkey to abide by the U.N. resolutions which set out conditions and suggestions for a

settlement. Turkey also needs to respect international law regarding Greek sovereignty in the Aegean.

Mr. Speaker, on a more optimistic note, the chronically strained relations between Greece and Turkey have recently become less in the aftermath of severe earthquakes that hit both countries last summer. The acts of humanity that Greece and Turkey demonstrated in aiding each other generated a new favorable world sentiment and opened a new chapter in the relations between the two countries. Consistent with this new spirit of cooperation, Greece has moderated its previous inflexible objection to Turkey's acceptance to membership in the European Union. Hopefully, this new spirit will gain momentum and thereby help to restore harmony and peaceful coexistence between the two countries.

Mr. Speaker, we celebrate Greek independence to reaffirm the common democratic heritage we share. Greek Independence Day, like the Fourth of July, reminds us that we have the duty to defend liberty—whatever the cost. To maintain our freedom, we can take neither it nor its architects for granted. That is why we honor those who secured independence for Greece so many years ago.

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, it is with great respect and profound admiration that I rise today to recognize the 179th anniversary of Greek Independence.

March 25th is a date that will live forever in the hearts and minds of Greeks and Greek-Americans. On March 25, 1821, after nearly 400 years under the Ottoman yoke, the Greeks revolted against the Turks and after a fierce struggle won their independence. During all these years of occupation the people of Greece kept their language, their religion and their sense of identity.

We share with the people of Greece this fierce spirit of independence and love of freedom.

A country with a history stretching back almost 4,000 years, Greece is the cradle of democracy and its great philosophers were an invaluable inspiration for our founding fathers. In ancient Athens they found a model for the new democracy they were going to establish in America.

For many years, Greece has been a reliable ally of the United States. During World War II, the Greeks sided unanimously with the Allies. The years of German occupation were a particularly hard time for Greece. Starvation decimated the population while executions and deportations contributed to the catastrophe. But from the first moments of the occupation a mass resistance movement came into being, bravely fighting the Nazi conquerors.

After enduring a military dictatorship, the Greek people from 1974 onwards devoted all their efforts to consolidating democracy in the land of its birth and laying the foundations for a better life. Today, Greece is a member of NATO and the European Union and remains faithful to the cause of peace and democracy.

My fellow colleagues, please join me as we celebrate Greek independence and remember those of Greek heritage who are living in the United States and have contributed so greatly to our communities and our country.

Mr. TIERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today in honor of the 179th anniversary of Greek independence. As a member of the Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues, I join my colleagues in paying tribute to the Greek nation and its people.

Over the last year, Greece has continued to be an active and important member of the international community. During the devastating earthquakes that ravaged Turkey last year, Greece reached out its hand to help its neighbor. This act of kindness was inspiring to us all, proving that it is possible to set aside differences in times of need. We should not be surprised, though, by Greece's actions. As a member of NATO and the European Union, Greece has continually shown its commitment to international peace and security.

The United States and Greece share a common philosophy that promotes democracy. Of course, it was Greece that paved the way for the great experiment which became the United States of America. Every American who enjoys freedom and democracy owes the Greek people a debt of gratitude for inspiring our founding fathers.

On behalf of the people of the Sixth Congressional district of Massachusetts and myself, I wish to extend congratulations to the people of Greece on this happy occasion. I am honored to have been selected to be one of two Grand Marshals in this year's Independence Day parade in Boston and know the day will be enjoyed by many. I look forward to many more years of happy and productive relations between the United States and Greece.

Mr. COYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join in this special order commemorating Greek Independence Day.

As a Member of Congress representing a district with a great many Greek-American constituents, I am well aware of the many contributions that Greek Americans have made to our nation. Today I join over 1 million Greek Americans and the people of Greece in commemorating the fight for Greek independence.

It is only fitting that the Congress of the United States commemorate the struggle that led Greek independence. The ancient city-states of Greece made many vital contributions to western civilization. The foundations of Western literature, drama, science, architecture, and philosophy were laid by the people of ancient Greece. The Greek language has enriched other languages with words and concepts like philanthropy, harmony, music, techne, sophistication, architecture, ecology and thousands of others. But perhaps ancient Greece's most important gift to the modern world was the creation of the concept of democratic self-government. The Founding Fathers of this country, educated in the classics, looked to the ancient Greeks, among others, for insight and inspiration when they were working to form a new national government.

179 years ago, however, when our country was prospering under its newly established democratic government, Greece—the cradle of democracy—was a subjugated nation ruled by the Ottoman Empire. In fact, at that point, the Ottoman Empire had dominated the Greek people for over 400 years, and many Greeks were finding Ottoman rule to be increasingly oppressive and unacceptable.

Greek patriots rose up against the Ottomans in March of 1821. The struggle of the courageous Greek patriots against a powerful empire won the support of many influential figures in Western Europe and the United States. Europeans and Americans identified with the Greek people—the descendants of the nation that had so strongly influenced western civilization. The French, British, and

Russian governments eventually intervened in the conflict on the Greeks' behalf and forced the Ottoman Empire to recognize Greece as an independent state in 1829.

Mr. Speaker, thousands of Greek patriots fought and died for their country's freedom with the same passion that inspired the Founding Fathers. Consequently, it is appropriate that we remember them today, the 179th anniversary of the beginning of the struggle for Greek independence. I am pleased to join my colleagues in commemorating this very special day.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on this occasion on which we salute the great nation and people of Greece, the Hellenic Republic as they celebrate the 179th anniversary of Greece's independence. I commend the gentleman from Florida, Mr. BILIRAKIS for taking the initiative once again to ensure that members have the opportunity to convey our thoughts on this important day. The United States and Greece have enjoyed a long and close relationship. The people of the United States recognize and revere Greece as the cradle of the democratic tradition that has allowed this country to rise to the heights of its greatness.

We are fortunate to have benefitted from the contributions of those immigrants from Greece who have contributed their toil, their knowledge and their culture to our American civilization, and we appreciate the warmth of the citizens of Greece reflected in the welcome they provide to Americans that are fortunate enough to be able to visit the shores of Greece, its beautiful islands and countryside.

Greece plays an important role in helping to stabilize the Balkans, one of the more dangerous neighborhoods of Europe. In our International Relations Committee we keep the relations between Greece and the United States under close review. I am pleased to report that the state of those relations is healthy. I am calling on this occasion for our government to support the process of reconciliation that is now underway between our two NATO allies, Greece and Turkey. The Congress is fully supportive of this effort, and we hope for an outcome that will produce lasting stability in this strategically vital part of the world.

I hope that all my colleagues and fellow citizens will avail themselves of this occasion to reflect upon the blessings of democracy, for which we will be forever indebted to the ancient Hellenes, and upon our good fortune today in having such a close and reliable ally as the great nation of Greece.

Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island. Mr. Speaker, it is with great enthusiasm that I stand before you today to recognize the 179th anniversary of Greece, one of our nation's closest allies. I want to praise my colleagues from Florida and New York for their efforts in organizing this special order and also for organizing the Congressional Caucus on Hellenic issues.

It is no secret that the democratic principles of equality and freedom were advocated by great Greek thinkers. These principles served as an inspiration to our founding fathers and were heavily relied upon as they drafted the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution. In the words of Thomas Jefferson: "to the ancient Greeks * * * we are all indebted for the light which led ourselves out of * * * darkness." Just as today's youth is educated on our nation's humble beginnings by studying the lives of the framers, they

should also learn about the great Greek thinkers whose visions of democracy helped our nation advance towards a free society.

The ties that bind Greece and the United States also extend towards the common role that our respective countries played in revolting against oppressive rule. Borrowing from the successful experience that our young nation utilized to free itself of English rule, the people of Greece rose up and declared their independence from the Ottoman Empire. After a long decade of struggle, freedom came to Greece. Just as it did in the democratic world at the time, their victory continues to inspire us today.

Greece has contributed to this nation in many other ways. The hard work of Greek-Americans has made an impact on our nation, especially in Greek communities such as Providence, Pawtucket and Newport, Rhode Island. It is a great honor to be able to represent the people of these communities in the United States Congress.

As the birthplace of classical political thought, as a strong ally to the United States, and as the motherland to the many valuable Greek immigrants who reside within our borders, Greece is indeed a country worthy of much praise. Again, I thank my colleagues for all their hard work in making this Special Order and I look forward to working with the Hellenic Caucus for the advancement of Greek issues.

Mr. WEYGAND. Mr. Speaker, I rise proudly in recognition of the 179th anniversary of Greek Independence and for the common democratic heritage shared by Greece and the United States. The struggle and victory of the Greek people against their Ottoman oppressors deserves special recognition for its contribution to human freedom and the triumph of democratic ideals and self-determination over those of tyranny and empire.

In 1821, the people of Greece, inspired by the American Revolution, broke out in open rebellion against four centuries of foreign occupation in an effort to rule themselves in accordance with the principles of democracy first developed in ancient Greece. Fully cognizant and proud of their past, the Greeks strove for their own traditions and engaged in an independence movement that can only be described as heroic and inspirational to all free peoples.

The Greeks defeated not only the Ottoman Turks to gain their independence, but also the Concert of Europe established at the Congress of Vienna following the Napoleonic wars. After decades of chaos and revolution, the Great Powers created an international system based upon conservative, counter-revolutionary rule designed to empower the monarchs and imperial states of the Continent with the primary goal of stability. Freedom, democracy and self-determination were not recognized by the statesmen of Europe as legitimate claims to independence.

However, the people of Europe, in spite of their leaders' beliefs, were inspired by the Greek cause and their struggle for freedom over tyranny. Recognizing that nothing would stop the Greek people from realizing their dreams and faced with a popular, just cause, the Great Powers of Europe embraced a free and independent Greece. It is a testament to the Greeks that they, and they alone were the only people to achieve independence in the first quarter of the 19th century despite many attempts by other peoples of Europe.

The Greek patriots' battle cry "Eleftheria I thanatos"—liberty of death—brings immediately to mind Patrick Henry's revolutionary speech "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" As we know America's revolutionaries of the 18th century were inspired by the traditions and philosophy of Greek antiquity. The influence and contributions of the Greeks to modern democracy, are to say the least, incalculable. We, as Americans, cannot place enough emphasis on the political and social contributions of the Greeks to our own nation.

"Our Constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling private disputes, everyone is equal before the law; when it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not a membership of a particular class, but the actual ability which the man possesses".

The statement, Mr. Speaker, was not made by our Founding Fathers, but by Pericles in an address more than two thousand years ago. With that, I would like to thank my colleagues for holding this special order and once again congratulate Greece on the anniversary of its independence.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege once again to take time to reflect and honor Greek Independence Day from the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives. March 25, 2000 marked the 179th Anniversary of the beginning of the revolution that freed the Greek people from the Ottoman Empire.

For almost 400 years, from the fall of Constantinople in 1453 until the declaration of Greek Independence in 1821, Greece remained under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. These were dark centuries for the nation that was the cradle of Western democracy, philosophy and art. During this time, Greeks were deprived of all civil rights. Their schools and churches were shut down. Greek Christian and Jewish boys were kidnapped from their families and raised as Moslems to serve the Sultan.

Shortly after Greece regained her independence, in December 1823, the great and famous U.S. Representative from Massachusetts, Daniel Webster, reflected on this time in Greek history, "This (Greek) people, a people of intelligence, ingenuity, refinement, spirit and enterprise, have been for centuries under the atrocious unparalleled Tartarian barbarism that ever oppressed the human race." We are all proud of the fact that many volunteers from across the United States went to Greece to participate in the war for Greek independence.

Greece and the United States have always been linked by their common histories of waging wars for independence, their beliefs in freedom and basic human rights, and their commitment to democracy. We are also closely tied by blood. During the 1900s, one in every four Greek males between the ages of 15 and 45 departed for the United States. Today, American society flourishes and benefits from the contributions of the descendants of these original Greek immigrants. Further forging the links of blood and sacrifice, over 600,000 Greeks died fighting on the side of the Allies during World War II and in the civil war that followed—that was nine percent of the entire population of Greece at the time.

Massachusetts, with such famous Greek Americans as Governor Michael Dukakis and Senator Paul Tsongas, has a rich Greek American culture. In my hometown of Worcester, Massachusetts, the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of St. Spyridon, under the leadership of Father Dean Paleologos, reminds us of this vibrant Greek American community. Each year, in Worcester, this important day is celebrated by teaching children to recite poetry and songs commemorating their past and their heritage.

Today, we see the generous heart of Greece at work again, as President Stephanopoulos and Foreign Minister Papandreu endeavor to end decades of hostility between Greece and Turkey. The improved climate of relations between Greece and Turkey cultivated by these Greek leaders continues to sustain hopes that some of the long unresolved issues between these two nations may eventually be tackled.

In a concrete way, Greece has moved toward better relations with Turkey. Following an arrangement made when Mr. Papandreu visited Ankara last January, a delegation of Greek Foreign Ministry officials, headed by Secretary-General Stelios Perrakis, opened discussion in the Turkish capital on February 28th to impart Greece's knowledge and experience, as a member of the European Union, on the measures and methods Turkey needs to pursue in its own quest to become a member of the EU.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my gratitude and respect to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and the gentlelady from New York (Mrs. CAROLYN MALONEY) for their leadership of the Hellenic Caucus. Through their hard work, all Members of this House are better educated on and involved in the challenging issues facing modern Greece today.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, today I am honored to commemorate the 179th anniversary of Greece's independence from the Ottoman Empire, and to celebrate the shared democratic traditions of Greece and the United States.

Greece declared its independence on March 25, 1821, ending nearly 400 years of domination by the Ottoman Empire and restoring a democratic heritage to the very cradle of democracy.

The special relationship between the people of Greece and the United States has been reinforced throughout our country's short history. Our Founding Fathers established this nation based on the teachings of ancient Greek philosophers and their struggle to build a democratic society. And, in turn, the American experience inspired the Greek people in their struggle for independence nearly 180 years ago.

Our shared democratic ideals have formed the basis of a strong and sustained friendship between Greece and the United States, and even today, Greece remains one of our most important allies and trusted partners in the global community.

And the many contributions of Greek-Americans to shaping our society and building our cultural heritage have been as critical to the United States as its friendship with Greece. My district in New York has benefitted immeasurably from the many contributions of our Greek-American community over the years.

I am proud to join my colleagues today in commemoration of Greek Independence Day,

and in celebration of the many contributions of Greece and Greek-Americans to the United States and the world.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCKEON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Mrs. MINK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MINK of Hawaii addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. FOSSELLA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FOSSELLA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

IN CELEBRATION OF GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I too would like to join my colleagues, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS) in honor of the 179th anniversary that marks the Greek's national day of independence, and I thank the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) for organizing a special order each year to celebrate Greek Independence Day.

Greece had remained under the Ottoman empire for almost 400 years; 400 years that Greek people were deprived of all their civil rights. Even under the threat of death, Greeks fought back by continuing to educate their children in their culture, their language, and their religion. On March 25, we celebrate this courage; this the 179th anniversary of freedom and independence for Greece.

I wish we had more to celebrate today, to be able to celebrate the return of the Elgin Marbles to their homeland. The Elgin Marbles are magnificent sculptures that were created to adorn the Parthenon. Their detail and beauty are even more profound when one knows these sculptures were actually carved into the Parthenon itself after it had been constructed.

However, in 1806, these sculptures were removed, sometimes broken in half, and transported to England. They are now in view in the British museum, far away from their native land.

In this age of open communication, friendship, and a unified Europe, we must work together to see that these marbles will soon be returned to their homeland. In this respect, I join my colleagues, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. GILMAN) in their House Resolution stating the importance of returning the Elgin Marbles back to Greece.

I am also very pleased to have welcomed today Dimitris Avramopoulos, the mayor of Athens, to Washington. He joined members of the Hellenic Caucus and other Members of Congress today for a discussion on the progress that Athens has made in becoming a global partner and leader and city. Through his efforts, the mayor's, he has made Athens a leading contributor to cities around the world in policy; and he has diligently worked to create a forum for mayors from other cities and capitals throughout the world to work together on their common goals.

I am very fortunate and privileged to represent the largest Hellenic community outside of Athens, one of the most vibrant communities of Hellenic Americans in our country. It is truly a very great pleasure for me to co-chair the Hellenic Caucus and to represent so many fine friends from Greece in my district. The caucus now has a record 72 bipartisan membership who are committed to bringing the voices of Hellenic Americans to the floor of the United States capitol, as we are tonight. We continue to strengthen the voice of Hellenic Americans in promoting legislation, monitoring and arranging of briefings on current events and handing out information to all Congressional Members on such important developments as the renewed talks between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, U.S. aid to Greece and Cyprus and the continued dispute in the Aegean.

In the coming year, we hope to see peace and justice in the Aegean, and justice, finally, in Cyprus after so many years of illegal occupation and invasion. And we need to see not only peace in northern Greece, but the restoration of human rights to the many cultures and people suffering throughout the world.

As we celebrate the 179th anniversary of Greek independence and the special bond of friendship between our two great countries, I would like to leave my colleagues with a quote from Percy Shelley, and he said, "We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our art have their roots in Greece."

So I join him and many others in not only paying tribute to Greek Independence Day, but also the many contributions of Greek Americans to our culture here in America.