

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.