

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

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

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

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

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to address the House while our presiding officer is a fellow representative from the San Fernando Valley, the area that can best be described currently as the center of world culture. Throughout the ages, however, Greece has been the center of world culture; and that is why I am proud to join with so many members of the Hellenic Caucus in addressing the House with regard to the 179th anniversary of Greek independence.

Mr. Speaker, 179 years ago, on March 25, 1821, the Greek people declared their independence, throwing off the yoke of over 400 years of Ottoman oppression. Greek patriot Regas Fereos issued the rallying cry of the struggle, shouting that it is better to be free for an hour than to have 40 years of imprisonment and enslavement.

Greek freedom fighters looked to the American revolution and American democracy for inspiration, and adopted their own declaration of independence. At the same time, our Founding Fathers were guided by the democratic principles that first arose in Greece, and they took to heart the Hellenic ideals of ancient Greece, the birthplace of democracy.

This is a day for us to reflect on the vital alliance between Greece and the United States and to pay our debt to Hellenic ideals and to Hellenic culture. It is a day for Greek Americans to take pride in the independence of Greece and in the ancient culture of all Hellenians.

Mr. Speaker, as we take note of Greece's great victory in its war of independence, we must also remember that there remain problems in the eastern Mediterranean, problems between Greece and the successor to its former colonial master, Turkey, the successor to the Ottoman empire. We must work to bring peace to the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean, and to do that we must deal with some of the remaining problems.

A Greek-Turkish dialogue can go forward, and I and my colleagues, so many of us, have called upon Turkey to stop making invalid claims on Greek sovereign territory and take respect for international law regarding the Aegean.

We have passed the Peace in Cyprus resolution, which calls upon a full withdrawal of Turkish troops from Greece. We must also recognize the importance of having Turkey adhere to

human rights standards and to respect the ecumenical patriarchy of the orthodox churches in Istanbul, also known as Constantinople. So as we look at history, we must also look at the current situation in the Aegean.

But returning, Mr. Speaker, to the historical ties between Greece and the United States, I should note that since its liberation, Greece has stood by America in each of our involvements in Europe; and America should continue to stand by Greece. Greece is one of only three nations outside of the British Empire that has been allied with the United States in every major international conflict of this century.

□ 1930

One out of every nine Greeks lost his or her life fighting the Nazis in World War II. Through the Marshall Plan, Greeks were able to rebuild; and the Marshall Plan stands as a monument to the close relations between the United States and Greece.

Grease remains a staunch NATO ally in a region of grave concern and, as I have noted, deserves American support.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with Greece and the Greek American community and the Hellenic Caucus in celebrating the 179th anniversary of Greek independence. I look forward to working with my colleagues in strengthening relations with this important ally.

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

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

EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Mrs. WILSON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. WILSON. Mr. Speaker, I am the gentlewoman from Albuquerque, New Mexico; and I have been asked to lead a discussion this evening about a bill that will be coming to the floor of the House this week. The bill is H.R. 7, and it is about education savings accounts.

What I would like to do tonight is talk a little bit about what they are, how the current law is set up with respect to education savings accounts, and what the proposed changes are that we are going to be considering on Thursday. Because there is quite a bit of misperception about what these changes will do. But before I do that, I would like to try to set this in the context of where we need to go in America with respect to public education.

In 1900 in this country, at the turn of the last century, 15 percent of American adults had a high school degree.

When we turned this century into the 21st century last New Year's Eve, 85 percent of American adults had a high school degree.

The big difference, though, was that, back in 1900, a third of Americans still lived on the farm. They could get a good job and support a family without having a high school degree.

My grandparents did not graduate from high school. My parents graduated from high school but did not go on to college. Like many Americans, I was the first generation in my family to go to college and get a college degree.

But what was good enough for us and what was good enough for our parents or our grandparents is not going to be good enough for our kids. And the reason is that Americans do not work on the farm anymore, except for about 2 percent of us; and the jobs that will be available for our children who graduate in 2010, 2012 and beyond are going to be profoundly different than they were for us when we graduated from high school, in my case, over 20 years ago.

They are going to require more education, more technical training, the ability to read and understand and solve problems, which means that, if we are going to make the 21st century just as much an American century as the 20th century was, we need to recommit ourselves as a Nation to public education.

In my hometown of Albuquerque, New Mexico, a third of our students do not graduate from high school. We have one of the highest drop-out rates in the Nation. We can no longer afford to let any child lag behind; and so we have to recommit ourselves as individuals, as parents, as teachers, as administrators, as communities, and as a Nation to make sure that, by the end of the next decade, 95 percent of our children graduate from high school and three-quarters of them go on to college or technical training or into the military. We need to commit ourselves to a decade of dreams for public education.

The bill that we are going to consider on Thursday is really only one little piece of that dream, but it is designed to encourage private investment in education and savings by parents and families and even corporations to invest in public schools and public education.

What does this do? It is called H.R. 7, and it is the Education Savings and School Excellence Act. But it builds on something that is already in public law.

Back in 1997, which was before I was elected to Congress, the Congress passed a law to establish education savings accounts.

So what is an education savings account? About 110 million Americans now have IRAs. To put it in its simplest terms, an education savings account is an IRA for our kids' college education. The way that the law works now is that we can put money into an education savings accounts, into one of