CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — HOUSE
March 25, 2004

SPECIAL ORDERS
The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker’s announced policy of Janu-
ary 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members
will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY
The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-
woman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

GENERAL LEAVE
Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members
may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their re-
marks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentle-
woman from New York?

There was none.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise with my colleague and
dear friend, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS), with whom I found-
ed and cochair the Hellenic Caucus to celebrate the Hellenic independence
of Greece from the Ottoman Empire. March 25 has the same resonance in Greece
that July 4 has in the United States.

Democracy traces its earliest roots back to ancient Greece, but it devel-
oped new strength in modern times from American colonists who de-
manded independence from Great Brit-
ain. When the Greeks of 1821 fought for independence from Turkey, they truly
drew inspiration from the ideals and
institutions of the fledgling United
States. After 400 years of Ottoman
rule, the Greeks began an 8-year battle
that ended with the defeat of the Turk-
ish Army.

Just as our defeat of the British
Army was remarkable, so too was the
Greeks’ ability to defeat the Ottomans,
a tremendous achievement. Against
impossible odds, the Greeks broke free
of one of the most powerful empires in
history and gained their independence.  

1845

Mirroring our patriotic displays on
July 4, Greeks celebrate this day with
parades, speeches and parties. As many
of my colleagues know, New York City
is the largest Hellenic pop-
ulation outside of Greece and Cyprus.

Western Queens, which I have the
honor of representing, is often called
Little Athens because of the large in-
fuence from Greece and Cyprus in that
neighborhood. Recognizing the many
similarities between our nations, it is a
pleasure to take time to pay tribute to
the Hellenic American community for
their many contributions to America.

We also honor the Federation of Hel-
lenic Societies, which will lead the
Greek Independence Day Parade in
Manhattan.

As the Olympics return to Greece
this summer, they have wisely chosen
the Olympic spirit as the theme of this
year’s parade. I am pleased to recog-
nize this year’s Grand Marshals, my
friends Demetrios and Georgia Kaloidis
and John and Margo Katsimatidis and
Honorary Marshals Yiannis Skoularikis
and George Papageorgopoulos. They
will be accom-
panied by the Federation President,
Apostolos Tomopoulos, and I will place
in the RECORD the many names of the
leaders of the Hellenic community who
will be participating this weekend.

In the year 2004, a vibrant Greek de-
ocracy once again serves as an inspi-
ration to its neighbors and the free
world. As discussions progress toward
an end to the 30-year division of Cy-
prus, we hope that the serious concerns
of the Greek Cypriot American com-
munity will be reflected in the final
agreement.

Forty-six members of the Hellenic
Caucus joined in a letter to Secretary
General Kofi Annan last Friday to
talk about the negotiations regarding
the re-unification of Cyprus before it
enters the European Union on May 1.
We expressed our support for the Sec-
retary General in bringing the parties
to the bargaining table, but expressed
concerns regarding some of the issues
that remain open: property rights, gov-
ernance, free movement between Greek
and Turkish areas of the island, and
the pace of demilitarization of the is-
land.

In particular, we raised questions
about the ability of Cypriots to regain
property that was seized or to receive
fair compensation, how compensation
would be funded, the unfairness of ask-
ing Greek Cypriots to foot the bill for
buying back their own property, the
ability of Greek Cypriots to have at
least the same rights to acquire prop-
erty in Turkish neighborhoods as for-
eigners do.

We stressed the importance of having
a central government that has the abili-
ty to monitor the situation in Cyprus
and to discuss the negotiations regarding
the reunification of Cyprus before it
enters the European Union on May 1.

While we applauded the plan to re-
duce the number of troops occupying
the island, we expressed the hope that
the United Nations would remain avail-
able to monitor the situation in Cyprus
for as long as possible. We are hopeful
that as the next round of negotiations take
place, Secretary General Annan will do
everything possible to ensure that our
concerns will be addressed so that the
final settlement will be acceptable to
to all Cypriots and Turks when it goes to
the vote on the island.

I congratulate the Federation for
honoring the Olympics in a year in
which the games will be returning to
their birthplace, Greece. The world has
truly benefitted from the ancient Hel-
lenic tradition of allowing athletic
competition to triumph over political
differences.

I hope this Greek Independence Day
will be a symbol of independence for all
enslaved people, and we hope for the re-
unification of Cyprus and its entrance
into the European Union. And, finally,
I hope that we will continue to work with leaders from the Greek community as we persist in our fight for a free and united Cyprus.
Ms. HARMAN. Mr. Speaker, as Greece celebrates its 183rd anniversary of freedom and the successful struggle for independence, I join my colleagues in congratulating the people of Greece and in extending heartfelt congratulations to those of Greek descent everywhere.

Greek Independence Day—like America’s Fourth of July—is a celebration of a love of freedom and self-government. As the world’s first democracy, ancient Greece was a model and a source of inspiration to our Founding Fathers.

In addition to shaping our early beginnings, modern Greece has been a strong friend and ally to the United States. Millions of Greeks have immigrated to the US and the contributions these families and individuals have made to our nation and communities have been immeasurable.

As a member of NATO, Greece has helped ensure the security of Europe’s southern flank. But, in addition to a strong relationship that is steeped in common culture and philosophy, the US and Greece are also connected by recent history. On September 11, Greece lost twenty-one citizens at the World Trade Center. We share in their grief and note, that since then, Greece has stepped up its efforts to combat terrorism at home and abroad. And, on the eve of the Olympics, Greek officials are working hard to ensure the safety of the thousands of visitors who will be in Athens celebrating these historic and exciting games.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to join my colleagues who are also committed to strengthening US-Greek ties and to working on issues of mutual interest. There are many international as well as regional challenges we can only solve through cooperation and mutual respect.

Mr. DOYLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Greece, one of America’s greatest allies and sources of inspiration, on the 183rd anniversary of its independence from the Ottoman Empire.

Greek Independence Day marks the return of independence to the birthplace of democracy. The Ancient Greeks profoundly shaped western culture. Many of the fundamental elements of our modern culture can be traced back to their logic, mathematics, the empirical method of scientific discovery, and of course many of the political and philosophical ideals embraced by our Founding Fathers, especially that of self-governance—originated with the ancient Greeks.

Today, Greece is one of our staunchest allies. It was one of the first countries to express solidarity with the United States after 9/11, and it has contributed significantly to the global war against terrorism through its military and humanitarian missions.

Greeks are Americans in my district of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and throughout the United States can celebrate this day with pride as they continue their rich tradition of philanthropy, civic duty, and education. Indeed, Greek-Americans have contributed greatly to the American way of life. Their commitment to family, community, and this nation is an inspiration to us all.

I hope that my colleagues and the American people will join me today in honoring Greek Independence Day and the continued democratic friendship that exists between our nations.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, the 183rd anniversary of Greece’s revolt against the Ottoman Empire is an opportune time to congratulate the people of Greece for their ability to prevail against great odds in creating their modern, progressive state. Having just returned from Athens with my colleagues BEN CARDIN, and following the recent elections that resulted in a victory for New Democracy, I think we should take this opportunity also to review the numerous challenges Greece faces if she is to meet her obligations as a participating State of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Since 1821, the people of Greece have overthrown the Ottoman Empire, survived a war with Turkey which created 1.3 million refugees, turned back an invasion by Italy and suffered through occupation by Nazi Germany. Since World War II they have lived through a full-fledged civil war against communism in which 100,000 Greeks were killed, and 700,000 were internally displaced. And, from 1967 through 1974, they were under the control of a right-wing military junta. It is important to remember this tumultuous history of Greece when we acknowledge their success, and when we discuss the democratic reforms in progress.

Security for this summer’s Athens Olympic Games is a matter of concern among Members of Congress due to our ongoing war against terrorism. The United States has helped Greece by providing funding and management for a security system as robust as possible, and I hope the American people will take advantage of the joint efforts between our government and the Government of Greece and enjoy the Games.

As a member of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, I am concerned also about the efforts Greece must make to fulfill her OSCE human rights obligations, particularly those involving trafficking in persons, freedom of religion and of the Jewish community in Greece that tourists and the outside world, particularly those involving popular government and the Government of Greece and enjoy the Games.

Through the assistance of Ambassador Thomas Miller, Rep. CARDIN and I met with officials of the Government of Greece and representatives of various NGOs to discuss Greece’s progress in addressing and solving problems involving human trafficking. As the author of the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act, I am concerned that Greece has just barely moved from Tier Three to Tier Two. The police-based Committee on Trafficking, created in November 2001, clarified how their victims of trafficking screening process works and reported that in 2003, 49 criminal organizations had been broken up with 284 arrests, and 93 victims had been liberated with 28 characterized as victims. Others did not get victim status because they either opted to go home or were in Greece legally with passports. They described their two major anti-trafficking units, in Athens and Thessaloniki, and the training in anti-trafficking that is being taught at all levels of the police academies. The Committee has produced, in thirteen languages, “Know Your Rights,” a pamphlet explaining to the trafficked steps toward safety. Victims are sent to NGO-supported shelters. After touring a shelter in Athens we were struck by the positive attitudes of the women, and came away with renewed hope for them.

While these are all positive steps, the visit made clear that Greece needs to put more effort and funding into curbing human trafficking, and that the government and the Church are taking steps toward safety. Victims are sent to NGO-supported shelters. After touring a shelter in Athens we were struck by the positive attitudes of the women, and came away with renewed hope for them.

While these are all positive steps, the visit made clear that Greece needs to put more effort and funding into curbing human trafficking, and that the Church is taking steps toward safety. Victims are sent to NGO-supported shelters. I urge the new government of Prime Minister Karamanlis to focus on this issue.

We sought clarification of the problems non-Orthodox religious believers face in Greece and met with Muslim, Jewish, Protestant and Catholic religious leaders. The Thrace Muslim Association pointed out that although there are more than 11,000 Muslims in Athens, there is no mosque, and yet 22 unofficial houses of prayer needed permits. The Thessaloniki cemetery, Muslim dead must be transported over 800 kilometers to Thrace for proper burial. It is important, there is a new mosque being constructed in Athens—it is nowhere near where the Muslims live, and it will be funded by the Saudis, a sect not particularly welcome by the local Muslem community nor by the Greek Government. We heard their complaints about limited military promotions, no work in the judiciary, limited job availability, and a poorly applied immigration law.

Non-Orthodox Christian leaders spoke about discrimination as opposed to persecution, emphasizing the need to change society for their acceptance.

Greek Jews—the Jewish community that, at 80 percent, lost a larger portion than any other community under the Fascist-ravaged—numbered around 100,000, concentrated in Athens and Thessaloniki. With 3 functioning synagogues, Rabbis must be brought in from other countries for the High Holidays. We were told “anti-Semitism is not widely and visibly expressed, but is expressed in many ways.” The press is anti-Semitic under the guise of anti-Zionist or anti-Israeli statements, and is pro-Palestinian Liberation Army. School texts continue to have anti-Semitic materials and lack acknowledgement of the Holocaust, but have improved since the past. Vandalism of Jewish sites occurs with little to no punishment.

Finally, we visited the relocated Roma camp in Spata, near the Athens airport, which is on an abandoned toxic NATO dump. They lack reliable running water or sewers, which is justified by the authorities since this is an illegal settlement on airport land, yet the 24 families, all with legal papers, live in portable homes supplied by the municipality and the children go to public school. They are never visited by local authorities, including doctors, despite promises. Their village is only accessible by unstable mud roads, which become a barrier in wet weather. It became clear that the two most important things needed for this community are permanent homes and a job for everyone that is seeking the opportunity.

These are snapshots of Greece, the invisible Greece that tourists and the outside world, even many Greeks, never see. Trafficked women who are forced to serve as sex slaves. Jews, Muslims and non-Orthodox Christians treated as second-class citizens. And Greek Roma whose basic needs are disregarded. We should consider this 200th anniversary of the fight for freedom, but still must wait for all Greeks to equally share that freedom.

The new government under Prime Minister Karamanlis has a great opportunity to step forward and work toward solutions in these matters. In my capacity as OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues, and as Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, I look forward to working with the Prime Minister and with other Greek parliamentarians to help find answers to these problems.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, on March 25, 1821, after nearly 400 years of Ottoman
rule, Greece became an independent state. But, even before there was a state, the influence of the Greek people was well established by their countless contributions to art, sport, culture, literature and government. No Congressional recognition of Greek Independence Day, can be made without an acknowledgment of the important contributions the people have made to the pursuit of democratic ideals here in the United States and the world over.

Every school-aged child is familiar with the story of how the Founding Fathers modeled the framework for American government on principles first laid down and discussed by the ancient Greeks thousands of years ago. Thomas Jefferson called ancient Greece, “the light which led ourselves out of Gothic darkness.” Today, as we need to celebrate Greek Independence Day, and celebrate the Greek-American heritage that continues to strengthen our communities and enrich our society, let us also recognize the influence the Greek people, past and present, have had on the strength of our democracy.

Greece and the United States are bound by history, mutual respect, and common ideals. In the coming year, the world will converge on Greece to participate in the Olympic Games, the largest pageant of athletic skill and competitive spirit on the planet. On Greek Independence Day, it is fitting that the Olympic torch returns to its homeland, as we mark the independence of a nation Thomas Jefferson called “the light which led ourselves out of Gothic darkness.” Ancient Greece sparked many flames of political, social, and artistic innovation—the philosophy of Socrates and Plato, the plays of Sophocles and Aristophanes, and the epic poetry of Homer.

But Ancient Greece’s greatest legacy is the establishment of democratic government and the Hellenic belief that the authority to govern derives directly from the people. After 400 years of rule by the Ottoman Empire, independence was especially meaningful to the people who burn with a deep rooted commitment to freedom. Greek ancestors passed on the traditions of liberty and freedom, of hard work and an appreciation of culture to their children and grandchildren, many of whom are proud Greek Americans and continue to provide important contributions to American life.

Today Greece is a true ally of the United States, a valued partner in NATO, and host to the world for the 2004 Olympics in Athens. My district is celebrating the Hellenic Caucus, to honor an important part of community providing diversity and culture to our churches, schools, and neighborhoods.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Greece for its contributions past and present, as they continue to address the issues.

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the 183rd anniversary of Greek Independence Day. Nearly two centuries ago, a small band of dedicated patriots rose up to end four centuries of oppression and foreign domination of their homeland. The great Greek thinker Herodotus once wrote “Great deeds are usually wrought at great risks.”

Today, Greeks worldwide join in celebration of this great deed and honor the bravery and self-sacrifice of their ancestors.

Twenty-five hundred years ago, the birth of democracy in Greece ushered in one of the golden ages of world history. The ancient Athenians created a civilization unparalleled in its original thinking and in its contributions to world thought, especially in the arts. We are aware which not only valued human life and dignity, but saw the dawn of a new era in political and social thought and artistic and scientific innovation.

Thomas Jefferson called ancient Greece “the light which led ourselves out of Gothic darkness.” In fact, our founding fathers drew heavily on the political experience and thinking of the ancient Greeks. Many of these great philosophers are honored in the House chamber, their faces adorning the walls above the visitors gallery. If ancient Greece had a muse, its light which led themselves out of Gothic darkness.

This year we have more reason than ever to celebrate the legacy of Greece, as the Olympic torch returns to its birthplace and real home. Just as Greeks gave the world democracy, so they taught us the Olympic ideals of peace, prowess return to their birthplace and real home. Just as Greeks gave the world democracy, so they taught us the Olympic ideals of peace, friendship, and honor.

This year we once again witnessed the peaceful electoral transfer of power from one Greek to another. This year we celebrate the passage of three decades, since modern Greece reclaimed its mantle as a democratic role model for the nations of the world. Its once unsettled domestic politics has long since given way to an uncontestably stable, yet colorful, democracy. Just this month, we once again witnessed the peaceful electoral transfer of power from one democratic party to another.

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Greece remains our critical strategic partner in the post-cold-war world. We cooperate closely in promoting peace and stability in the Balkans. Economic ties with Greece are vital to virtually every Balkan state. Athens has been a firm supporter of efforts to settle the Cyprus problem, and it remains committed to a just, lasting, and democratic settlement of this issue. In this month, this body applauds Greece’s historic and courageous efforts in recent years to resolve differences with its neighbor Turkey.
Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Greek people on the 183d anniversary of their independence, and I join my colleagues in thanking them for their vast contributions to world civilization and especially to our Nation.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

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

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, first I would say that I am very pleased to be doing this special order in conjunction with thegentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), who has been very stellar, a great friend of both republics, Greece and Cyprus, all through the years. And today I too proudly rise to celebrate Greek Independence Day and the strong ties that bind the nation of Greece and the United States.

One hundred and eighty-three years ago, the people of Greece began a journey that would mark a symbolic rebirth of democracy in the land, in the land where those principles of human dignity were first espoused. They rebelled against more than 400 years of Turkish oppression. The revolution of 1821 brought independence to Greece and emboldened those who still sought freedom across the world.

I congratulate Greek Independence Day each year for the same reasons that we celebrate our July 4. It proved that a united people through sheer will and perseverance, can prevail against tyranny. Men such as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, and Euripides developed a then-unique notion that men could, if left to their own devices, lead themselves, and persevere, can prevail against tyranny. Men such as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, and Euripides developed a then-unique notion that men could, if left to their own devices, lead themselves, and persevere, can prevail against tyranny.

Revolutions embody a sense of heroism, bringing forth the greatness of the human spirit. To the ancient Greeks and our colonial forefathers, looked back to the teachings of ancient Greek philosophers for inspiration as they sought to craft a strong, new republic. In 1821, the Greeks looked to our Founding Fathers for inspiration when they began their journey toward freedom. The history of Greek independence, like that of the American Revolution, is filled with many stories of courage and heroism. There are parallels between the American and Greek Revolutions.

Encouraged by the American Revolution, the Greeks began their rebellion after four centuries of Turkish oppression, facing what appeared to be insurmountable odds. Both nations faced the prospect of having to defeat an empire to obtain liberty. And if Samuel Adams, the American revolutionary leader who lit the first spark of rebellion by leading the Boston Tea Party, had a Greek counterpart, that man would be Alexander Ypsilantis.

Ypsilantis was born in Istanbul, and his family was later exiled to Russia. Ypsilantis served in the Russian army, and it was there, during his military service, that he became involved with a secret society called the "Philike Hetairia," which translated means "friendly society" was made up of merchants and other Greek leaders, but the intent of the society was to seek freedom for Greece and her people.

The group planned a secret uprising for 1821 to be led by Ypsilantis. He and 4,500 volunteers assembled near the Russian border to launch an insurrection against the Turks. The Turkish army massacred the ill-prepared volunteers, and Ypsilantis was caught and placed in prison, where he subsequently died. However, the first bells of liberty had been rung, and Greek independence would not be stopped.

When news of Greek uprising spread, the Turks killed Greek clergymen, clerics, and laity in a frightening display of force. In a vicious act of vengeance, the Turks invaded the island of Patras and slaughtered 25,000 of the local residents. The invaders enslaved half the island's population of 100,000.

Although many lives were sacrificed at the altar of freedom, the Greek people rallied around the battle cry "Eleftheria I Thanatos" "liberty or death," mirroring the words of American Patriot Patrick Henry who said: "Give me liberty or give me death." These words personified the Greek patriots' unmitigated desire to be free.

We all know that the price of liberty can be very high. History is replete with the names of the millions who have sacrificed their lives to preserve what scholars throughout history warned that 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. Freedom is America's heart. It is central to our being, and from the beginning we have recognized that freedom is not just an American right, it is a God-given right to every citizen of the world.

We must never forget that freedom must be constantly guarded. It is a noble but fragile thing that can be stolen or snuffed out if not protected. We cannot take for granted that we are endowed with certain inalienable rights. We enjoy our freedom only because we have been willing to fight and die for it just like our forefathers and the valiant Greeks in 1821. Mr. Speaker, on this 183rd birthday of Greek Independence, when we celebrate the restoration of democracy to its conception, we also celebrate the triumph of the human spirit and the strength of man's will. The goals and values that the people of Greece share with the people of the United States reaffirm our common democratic heritage. This occasion also serves to remind us that we must never take for granted the right to determine our own fate.

Madam Speaker, today I proudly rise to celebrate Greek Independence Day and the strong ties that bind the nation of Greece and the United States.

One hundred and eighty-three years ago, the people of Greece began a journey that would mark the symbolic rebirth of democracy in the land where those principles to human dignity were first espoused. They rebelled against more than 400 years of Turkish oppression. The revolution of 1821 brought independence to Greece and emboldened those who still sought freedom across the world.

I congratulate Greek Independence Day each year for the same reasons that we celebrate our July 4. It proved that a united people through shear will and perseverance, can prevail against tyranny. Men such as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, and Euripides developed a then-unique notion that men could, if left to their own devices, lead themselves, and persevere, can prevail against tyranny. Men such as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, and Euripides developed a then-unique notion that men could, if left to their own devices, lead themselves, and persevere, can prevail against tyranny.

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One man with courage is a majority." Quoting Jefferson on the anniversary of Greek independence is particularly appropriate. Jefferson, and the rest of the Founding Fathers, looked back to the teachings of ancient Greek philosophers for inspiration as they sought to craft a strong, new republic. In 1821, the Greeks looked to our Founding Fathers for inspiration when they began their journey toward freedom.

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Another heroic Greek whom many believe was the most important figure in the revolution was Theodoros Kolokotronis. He was the leader of the Klephs, a group of rebellious and resilient Greeks who refused to submit to Turkish subjugation. Kolokotronis used military strategy he learned while in the service of the English Army to organize a force of over 7,000 men. The Klephs began their fight on the Turks from their mountain strongholds, battering their oppressors into submission.

One battle in particular, where Kolokotronis led his vastly outnumbered forces against the Turks, stands out. The Turks had encamped the Peloponnes with 30,000 men. Kolokotronis led his force, which was outnumbered by a ratio of 4 to 1, against the Turkish army. A fierce battle ensued and many lives were lost,