



## **Position Paper for the American Hellenic Institute**

As the birthplace of democracy, the country of Greece has a special place in the hearts and minds of Americans. From its fight against tyranny in World Wars I and II to its modern day support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, Greece has long been a stalwart and strategic ally of the United States. It is critical that we maintain a positive and mutually beneficial relationship with our Greek friends. Below are my positions on some of the issues of particular interest to your organization:

### **Cyprus and Turkey**

The 1974 Turkish invasion of the island of Cyprus was illegal and unwarranted. I fully support demilitarization of Cyprus, and believe that it is long past time for Turkish troops and settlers to Cyprus to leave the island. The United Nations has continually called for withdrawal of Turkish troops, and it should be noted that the UN's peacekeeping efforts are central to Cyprus' future and should be supported. Beyond withdrawal of troops from Cyprus, it is vital that Turkey renews its efforts to become a truly democratic nation that seeks constructive relations with its neighbors and with democratic countries worldwide. Additionally, I agree with Ambassador Ronald Schlicher that Cyprus, as a sovereign nation, has the right to enter into agreements with other nations, including one with Lebanon and Egypt for joint oil and natural gas exploration.

### **Greek-American Relations**

Americans are grateful for the consistent and healthy relationship we have with the Greek people. Greece is a critical ally in the Mediterranean region and a positive influence on its fledgling neighbors to the north, including Bulgaria. It also plays an increasingly crucial role in promoting stability in the Balkans and the Middle East. The United States can certainly benefit from Greece's strategic location and well-educated populace. One of the best ways of doing this is to support Greece in its desire to participate in the Visa Waiver Program. This mutually beneficial action would allow a freer exchange of information and knowledge between the two countries, resulting in a better understanding of our common values and a strengthening of our alliance.

### **Ecumenical Patriarchate**

The United States is a country that respects the freedom of religion and human rights of its citizens, and it seeks to foster the same values in other nations. Turkey's lack of

action to prevent attacks on the Ecumenical Patriarchate is wholly anathema to those principles, and we cannot accept the status quo. I echo Senator Barack Obama's call for the Turkish government's recognition of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's religious freedoms, and would support and co-sponsor legislation similar to Congresswoman Maloney's present resolution, H. Res. 373, that calls for the same goal.

## **FYROM**

An issue which many in the Greek American community have been outspoken on is the naming of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. I would support and co-sponsor legislation in the next Congress similar to the resolution proposed by Congresswoman Maloney (H. Res. 356), as well as the companion Menendez-Snowe bill in the Senate (S. Res. 300), urging all parties to work with the United Nations in finding a mutually acceptable name for the FYROM and ceasing state-sponsored propaganda from that nation's government.

I look forward to working with Senator Olympia Snowe, the first Greek American woman elected to the U.S. Congress, as well as with you and your organization, to improve Greek-American relations, engage in mutually beneficial policies, and consistently stand up on behalf of the Hellenic descendants across America. As I look back over my nearly decade of service as Senator Snowe's top staffer in Maine, I realize the profound effect that she has had on American-Greek relations, and I hope to use the knowledge I have learned from her to be an effective Congressman and a strong advocate for Greek-American ties. Thank you for your consideration.