

Remarks at a Greek Independence Day Celebration

March 26, 2026

The President. Well, thank you very much. This is a great honor. I wouldn't miss it. I'm supposed to be someplace at 5 o'clock, and I said, "There's no way I'm missing this one." Nobody would have the courage to do that.

But I'm delighted to stand before you today with a truly respected man of faith and a pillar of the Greek American community, Archbishop Elpidophoros, who is a highly respected man. And, Your Eminence, it's a great, great pleasure to have you. Thank you very much for coming.

Primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Archbishop Elpidophoros. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. It's so nice. We meet once a year, and I wouldn't miss it.

And to all of the Greek American patriots here this afternoon, let me begin by wishing you a very happy Greek Independence Day. Big deal.

We're pleased to be joined by many of the proud, hard-working Greek Americans serving in the Trump administration. I want as many as I can get.

We have the Director of Office of Science and Technology Policy Michael Kratsios. Where's Michael? Michael. Thank you, Michael. Great job. Done a good job.

Our Deputy Secretary of State, Mike Rigas. Thank you, Mike.

Along with the Greek Americans on the White House staff, including Director of the White House Visitor Office—and she does a great job—Alexandra Veletsis. Veletsis. Where are you, Alexandra? Thank you. Hello. You're in the corner.

And Senior Associate Staff Secretary Venetia Resciniti. That's right. With great parents too. And she's—you did a good job with your daughter. She's been incredible.

We can't forget our Greek American Members of Congress: Representatives Gus Bilirakis. Hi, Gus. Great guy. Mike Haridopolos. Mike. These are seriously Greek people. *[Laughter]* Nicole Malliotakis. And Jimmy Patronis.

Thanks as well to a great friend of mine and a man who did a fantastic job as Chief of Staff in the last administration, Reince Priebus. Reince. Did a great job.

And the chairman of Greeks for Trump, Christos Marafatsos.

I'm glad that's over with. *[Laughter]* The rest is easy. No, they're great people. They've been—with me, many from the beginning, right? Right from the beginning.

When America declared our independence 250 years ago, our Founding Fathers drew profound inspiration from the example of ancient Greece. And when the modern Greeks declared their own independence from a foreign empire a generation later, in 1821—a long time—they, in turn, looked to a place called America. Nice place. *[Laughter]*

Ever since, the United States and the Hellenic Republic have stood side-by-side as two proud and thriving nations upholding the Western traditions born in Greece more than 2,000 years ago. Tremendous culture.

In recognition of this cherished bond, we are pleased to welcome the Greek Ambassador to the United States, Mr. Antonis Alexandridis. What names. As well as the Ambassador from Cyprus, Evangelos Savva. I like that name.

And someone we know very well, the U.S. Ambassador to the Hellenic Republic—a person I know very, very well; she's an inspiration to a lot of people, especially if you happen to be Greek: Kimberlay. Kimberly Guilfoyle. Kimberlay.

No, Kimberly Guilfoyle has been my friend for a long time. I love calling her Kimberlay. [Laughter] That's my little pet name, right? But you are the greatest. And I heard they love you over there. I hope you come back here in 12 years or whenever the term ends. [Laughter] But come on up here, Kim. Stay alongside of us.

The debt that America and all of Western—and, by the way, where is my friend who's the most powerful man in all of politics? Where is John? He owns ABC. Where is he? John, where are you? Come on up here, John. Get up here. He loves publicity, this guy. [Laughter] Come on up here, John. He's got more things—he owns—he owns food stores, networks. Come on up. You want to bring your wife up? You can. She's really the boss. We know that. [Laughter] Come on up, John.

Boy, oh boy, they didn't have his name marked down. I would have been in big trouble. [Laughter] I think it is marked down a little further back. I'm not putting him in the back. Right, John? We've known each other too long.

Red Apple Group Founder John A. Catsimatidis. A long time.

The President. Huh? Come here.

Mr. Catsimatidis. We used to compete with each other.

The President. We used to, but——

Mr. Catsimatidis. You won. [Laughter]

The President. But never—[laughter]—the debt that America and all of Western civilization owes to the Greeks is ancient and eternal. And to this day, American soldiers plunge into combat, strengthened by the legends of Spartan warriors. American students still learn from the immortal wisdom of Socrates, the father of philosophy—who truly is—and Aristotle, the inventor of science. That's very good. It's good genetics you people have, right? [Laughter]

And under the Trump administration, we're reaffirming a sacred Greek principle that goes all the way back to a rocky hillside in the heart of ancient Athens that only citizens can vote in our elections. See? They do it right. Oh, I love that.

Michael, we're going to have to use that phrase a little bit more powerfully. But in Greece, that's what they believe. They've believed it for a long time. It makes a little sense. It's called common sense, isn't it, really?

Like so many Americans before us, the Trump administration is also drawing inspiration from the renowned Greek builders and engineers whose works have stood the test of time—incredibly, too. Instead of ugly boxes of brutal concrete, we're bringing back marble columns and restoring classical architecture to our Nation's Capital to make America beautiful again.

We're doing something outside that the Greeks would be very proud of. We're building one of the most beautiful ballrooms anywhere in the world, and we have beautiful columns, and we have beautiful sculpture, and we have beautiful, and they said it couldn't be done in this modern day, but we have very talented people. It's—I call it latent talent. We have some really incredible

talents. And they've been wanting a ballroom for 150 years. This is their ballroom. It's a very small room. This will serve for cocktails now, and we'll be able to do it right.

But you know, we used to—when a dignitary came, like His Eminence, they'd have a tent on the lawn. And when it rained, you were in deep trouble because the water would gather under the tent, and it was not pretty when you would see the President of a major country, or Prime Minister, or somebody of great religious faith where you had thousands of people, and the water was over their shoes. It didn't well—it didn't play well for the women. It was not a good situation. So we're taking—and by the way, see that beautiful gold curtain? Behind that is a knockout panel. And when we do knock out that panel—it will be opened in about a year and a half, maybe less—a magnificent—I build on time, on budget. I build, actually, faster than time and under budget, unlike the Federal Reserve.

And right there is going to be the entrance. It will be a beautiful, magnificent tunnel to the building, and it's going to be something that just—they've wanted—other Presidents have wanted this for literally 150 years. We never had it in the White House.

As all of you are aware, I spent my life as a builder in New York, and from my earliest days in that city, I have known and loved its incredible Greek American community and Greek architecture. I love Greek architecture.

I actually like the community more than the architecture. I think, that, I can say. But I do love the architecture, but I love that community.

From Astoria—oh, I like—I know more about Astoria than you want to know—[*laughter*]—in Queens, to the famous Greek diners that are staples of every neighborhood, there's—nobody has diners like the Greeks. Nobody does it like—I don't know what it is. But New York would not be the same without the grit and the spirit of Greeks.

Twenty-five years ago, on September 11, 2001, the Greek community lost a storied institution in the 9/11 attacks: the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, which all of you remember. I do. That sanctuary had stood for a long time—155 Cedar Street—over 100 years. And yet, the South Tower fell; it was totally destroyed.

But thanks to the men and women of New York's Greek community, the old church was rebuilt even bigger and better and more magnificent than the one before it, and this time using marble taken from the same quarry used to construct the Parthenon. The church now stands as a house of prayer and national shrine for all of the visitors to that sacred soil and Ground Zero. Boy, oh boy. What a day that was, right? What a terrible day that was.

We're pleased to be joined by one of the Greek titans who helped to rebuild this thing—I got to introduce him again now—John Catsimatidis—[*laughter*]—and Margo. Much more importantly, Margo. I want to thank you, John. [*Laughter*] No, I—he's really a friend of mine. The guy is great. He's a great guy. Very successful. And he's a nice person. A lot of people don't think so, but I know so. [*Laughter*] Okay? We're going to train them. We're going to train them, John.

And he's a—above all, a great patriot. You really are, too.

Margo Catsimatidis. He is.

The President. We appreciate it. As America celebrates—good.

As America celebrates our 250th anniversary this year—very exciting; we also have the Olympics coming, and we also have the World Cup coming—we remember that without the victory at Marathon, we might never have the victory at Yorktown. Without Athens, we might never have had the Philadelphia.

Today we remember our ancient heritage, we honor the origins of our Republic, we celebrate our cherished friendship with the Greeks, and we salute our Greek American patriots who are helping to make America great again. Right?

So it's an honor to be again with the archbishop, and I'd like to ask him to say a few extremely short words—[*laughter*]—because I am so late, you have no idea. [*Laughter*] I am so—but that's okay.

Archbishop, we don't need a long speech. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

Archbishop Elpidophoros. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. I will be brief. I promise. [*Laughter*] Greeks like to be brief in their words.

So today, Mr. President, once again, you'll bestow a superlative honor upon the Greek American community by your recognition of Greek Independence Day, March 25.

The annual celebration here at the White House, now its 40th year, Mr. President, is not only prestigious but binds America and Greece together in a strategic alliance that goes beyond deep friendship and mutual respect, which deepens in the critical sectors of defense, energy, and shipping, especially in this most significant year of 2026, when America observes its 250th anniversary, as you said, of the Declaration of Independence and Greece commemorates its 205th year since its own assertion of liberty and justice for all.

So, this year, all Americans are rejoicing over this noble experiment in self-governance, or, Mr. President, as your most esteemed predecessor Abraham Lincoln stated in his Gettysburg Address, "Government of the people, by the people, for the people." So, from the world's first democracy, Greece, to the world's greatest democracy, America.

Moreover, Mr. President, you have personally been the global champion for the cause of freedom of religion, the first freedom enshrined in the First Amendment of our Nation's Bill of Rights. And for this, we are ever grateful to you.

As children of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, under the longest serving leader in its history, whom you received here in the Oval Office last September, we thank you, Mr. President, for your unwavering support for the spiritual mission of our patriarchate and His All Holiness, our Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, and, of course, the ongoing effort to reopen the Theological School of Halki.

And of course, thank you for discussing this issue with President Erdoğan last October.

The President. And he treated you well, right?

Archbishop Elpidophoros. Very well. And he respected what you requested.

The President. Thank you.

Archbishop Elpidophoros. Thank you.

Mr. President, we are very grateful to you for your support of Greece and your support to the cause of justice in Cyprus. You recognize the fact that Greece stands as a beacon of stability and prosperity in the region. We pray that God will always bless you, Mr. President, for in every parish, during every service in our archdiocese, we pray for our country, the President, all those in public service, and our Armed Forces everywhere.

May you, the First Lady, your family, your administration, and our Nation's Armed Forces enjoy the best health, long life, grace, and strength.

Finally—you see, I'm brief. [*Laughter*]

Finally, everybody is wondering, Mr. President, what am I going to offer to you this year after the cross that I offered you last year. And here I go, what I can offer to you this year. Allow me to close with a special prayer we offer the Orthodox Christians during this season, every Sunday before Easter.

We pray for you, Mr. President, for you are the leader of the superpower of the world. And with this prayer, the Prayer of Saint Basil the Great, we say the following. And I ask all of you to pray with me.

Remember, O Lord, our pious and faithful President, whom you have allowed to govern on Earth, and all those in public service. Equip him with the armor of truth and with the shield of your good pleasure. Protect him in times of war, like now. Strengthen his arm and exalt his right hand. Make his Presidency strong, and subdue all hostile nations that thirst for war. Grant him profound and lasting peace. Whisper in his heart good things about your church and all your people so that he may perform his duties in tranquility and we may live a serene and peaceful life in all piety and modesty.

Remember, O Lord, our brothers and sisters in government and all civil servants and the Armed Forces. Preserve in your goodness those who are good. In your kindness, make good those who are evil. For you are the source of life and goodness, and to thee, we ascribe all glory. Amen.

Zito i Ellas!

Audience members. Zito i Ellas!

Archbishop Elpidophoros. God bless America!

Audience members. God bless America!

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:20 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Michael J. Rigas; and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey.

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