

Remarks at a Celebration of Greek Independence Day March 25, 2008

Thank you. Your Eminence, thank you very much. Welcome to the White House. I'm always open for a few suggestions. [Laughter] You're an easy man to listen to.

And I want to thank you all for coming. Here we are to celebrate the 187th anniversary of Greek independence. And it's an interesting place to celebrate it, isn't it? You know, the White House is a great symbol for independence and freedom and liberty. And it's a fitting place to celebrate the independence of Greece.

Mr. Minister, thank you for coming. We appreciate you coming all the way over for this event, and we're proud you're here. And thanks for bringing your son.

Mr. Ambassador, thanks for coming. Ambassador Mallias is with us today. Mr. Ambassador, there you are, right there, Ambassador. Thank you. It's good to see your wife. Appreciate you all being here. Ambassador Kakouris of—to Cyprus is with us—from Cyprus to U.S. is with us.

Senator, thank you for coming. It's good to see you again. We miss you around these parts. [Laughter] I don't know if you've missed these parts, but we miss you around these parts. [Laughter]

Father Alex, good to see you again, sir. Thanks. I appreciate very much my Greek American—fellow Greek American citizens coming, as well as those who wear the uniform. We're proud to be in your presence.

Your Eminence, all free people stand on the shoulders of Greece. In the ancient world where political power usually came from the sword, the people of Athens came together around a radical and untried idea: that men were fit to govern themselves. It was this freedom that allowed them to create one of the most vibrant societies in history. And that society deeply influenced America's Founding Fathers when they

sought to establish a free state centuries later.

Throughout their history, the people of Greece have been committed to liberty. They've also been committed to the important principle that liberty only survives when brave men and women are ready to come to its defense.

In the years leading up to Greece's war for independence, one of the rallying cries of the Greek people was that it was better to be free for an hour than to be a slave for 40 years. Those are the kind of folks who had their priorities straight.

The United States was by Greece's side from the very beginning of the struggle for independence. In those early days, some Americans volunteered to serve in the Greek army, and many more contributed the funds that were necessary to keep the fight alive. Former Presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson and James Madison all spoke in favor of the Greek people's right to self-determination. And after many long years, Greece emerged victorious and free. And that's what we're celebrating today.

And from that time forward, the United States and Greece have been strong allies in the cause of freedom. Today, we continue to work to spread the hope of liberty. Our countries are working together in Afghanistan, where Greek troops are an important part of the NATO forces that are restoring hope to that country. We're also partners in promoting stability in the Balkans and in the Middle East, where Greece provides peacekeepers in Bosnia and Kosovo and Lebanon. Please thank your Governments for this—strong signals that liberty is universal and that liberty will bring the peace we all hope.

Our Nation has been inspired by Greek ideals, and we have been enriched by Greek immigrants. Today, more than 1.3

million Americans trace their ancestry back to Greece, and we're better for having them here. America is a richer place, a better place.

Our two countries also share ties of faith. The Greek Orthodox Church has well over 1 million members in the United States. Under the leadership of this fine man, the Church is a source of strength and inspiration for a lot of our citizens. It's a proud part of our country's tradition of religious diversity and religious tolerance.

For nearly two centuries, the bonds between the United States and Greece have continued to strengthen. And during the earliest days of our friendship, one Greek leader told the American people, quote: "It is in your land that liberty has fixed her abode. In imitating you, we shall imitate our ancestors."

Today, I know that both our countries are making these ancestors proud through our commitment to freedom. And I'm con-

fident that this tradition of friendship between the United States and Greece will continue for many years to come.

And so I ask God's blessings on the people of Greece and the people of America. And now welcome the Metropolitan Youth Choir of the Archdiocese.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:41 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Archbishop Demetrios, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in America and his assistant for public affairs Reverend Father Alex Karloutsos; Minister of Development Christos Foliass of Greece and his son Sotiris; Greece's Ambassador to the U.S. Alexandros P. Mallias and his wife Françoise-Anne; and Cyprus's Ambassador to the U.S. Andreas S. Kakouris. The related Greek Independence Day proclamation of March 20 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Following a Tour of ColorCraft of Virginia in Sterling, Virginia March 26, 2008

The President. Jim, thank you very much for your hospitality.

James H. Mayes. Thank you, sir.

The President. Thank you all very much for greeting me here.

ColorCraft is a small, thriving business that will benefit from the stimulus package that the Congress passed earlier this year. And it will benefit from it because if they make—if Jim decides to purchase software or machinery, there is a tax incentive to encourage him to do so. He's made the decision to do so, and his company will be encouraged to do so through the Tax Code.

And that's important because when he buys a machine or when he buys software, somebody has to manufacture that. And therefore, there is a direct link between

the stimulus package and jobs. As well—and we talked about this earlier—a lot of the folks who work here at ColorCraft are going to get a check in the second week of May as part of the economic, progrowth stimulus package. And recently, there's been a mailer out to our citizens from the IRS. And this mailer basically describes the benefits from the stimulus package that people will receive.

One of the things that's very important for our citizenry to understand, that is, if you do not file an income tax return, you need to go to your local IRS office and get a form that will show the Government where you live and who you are, so you can get your check. If you file an income tax form, all you got to do is in your '07 income tax, you know, mail it in.