

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 2261

To designate Greece as a program country for purposes of the visa waiver program established under section 217 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 5, 2009

Mrs. MALONEY (for herself, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. MCMAHON, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. CAPUANO, Ms. BERKLEY, Mr. PASCARELL, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. SPACE, and Ms. TITUS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To designate Greece as a program country for purposes of the visa waiver program established under section 217 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4 The Congress makes the following findings:

5 (1) The Founding Fathers of the United States
6 drew heavily on the political experience and philos-
7 ophy of ancient Greece in forming our representative
8 democracy.

1 (2) Greece played a major role in the World
2 War II struggle to protect freedom and democracy
3 through such bravery as was shown in the historic
4 Battle of Crete, which provided the Axis land war
5 with its first major setback, setting off a chain of
6 events that significantly affected the outcome of
7 World War II.

8 (3) Throughout the 20th century Greece was
9 one of three countries in the world, besides the
10 former British Empire, that allied with the United
11 States in every major international conflict.

12 (4) Greece has been a reliable partner in the
13 North Atlantic Treaty Organization since joining in
14 1952.

15 (5) In 1981, Greece became one of the 15 origi-
16 nal European Union member countries and, in Jan-
17 uary 2001, successfully acceded to the Eurozone.

18 (6) Among all candidate countries for entry in
19 the visa waiver program, Greece constitutes a sepa-
20 rate and unique case in that it is the only country,
21 among the candidates, that meets all technical re-
22 quirements for inclusion in the program.

23 (7) Greece requires only a valid passport for
24 visiting United States citizens and not a visa.

1 (8) According to a September 2008 Government
2 Accountability Office report, Greece has a 1.6 per-
3 cent visa refusal rate, which is well below the max-
4 imum allowable 3 percent rate for refusals of U.S.
5 non-immigrant visitor visa applications.

6 (9) As of January 1, 2007, Greek passports
7 issued prior to January 1, 2006, are no longer valid
8 for travel. Therefore, Greek nationals are traveling
9 with new, machine-readable passports that are pro-
10 duced using state-of-the-art technology (biometrics)
11 to meet the highest possible security standards and
12 specifications.

13 (10) Greece is one of fifteen European nations
14 accepted as a Schengen country which allows for
15 travel through Europe as if you are traveling
16 throughout the United States. Greece is the only
17 Schengen country excluded from participating in the
18 visa waiver program.

19 (11) Countries included in the visa waiver pro-
20 gram with similar demographics and economic rela-
21 tions with the United States as Greece have 50 per-
22 cent more visitors to the United States due to their
23 visa waiver status.

24 (12) More than 50,000 Greek citizens visit the
25 United States each year.

1 (13) There are 3 million American citizens of
2 Greek ancestry residing in the United States.

3 (14) The Secretary of Homeland Security and
4 the Secretary of State administer the visa waiver
5 program, which allows citizens from 35 countries, in-
6 cluding all of the original 15 European Union mem-
7 bers except Greece, to visit the United States as
8 tourists without visas.

9 (15) In September 2007, Greece was the only
10 country formally nominated as a candidate country
11 for the Visa Waiver Program by the U.S. Depart-
12 ment of State yet was not included when the visa
13 waiver program expanded to include 8 new countries
14 in 2008.

15 **SEC. 2. DESIGNATING GREECE A VISA WAIVER PROGRAM**
16 **COUNTRY.**

17 Effective on the date of the enactment of this Act,
18 and notwithstanding section 217(c) of the Immigration
19 and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1187(c)), Greece shall be
20 deemed a designated program country for purposes of the
21 visa waiver program established under section 217 of such
22 Act.

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