

reform issue has to be addressed on the floor.

I just want to thank the gentlewoman again. I know this is just the beginning of our effort to make sure that this issue is raised by the GOP leadership and that we do have the time when it is considered.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY, 176 YEARS OF FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GIBBONS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. BILIRAKIS] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to honor the spirit of freedom by commemorating 176 years of Greek independence. March 25 is Greek Independence Day, and every year I speak on the House floor to recognize this important historical event.

The significance of Greek Independence Day can never be overstated. Like the Fourth of July, it continues to remind all of us to honor freedom regardless of the price.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania, my very good friend and colleague [Mr. GEKAS], at this point.

Mr. GEKAS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding. We have grown accustomed to the gentleman from Florida and his repetitive and necessary emphasis on Greek Independence Day and its celebration throughout the world.

The most noteworthy part of the celebration in which Americans of Greek descent yearly participate has to do, in my judgment, with the historical partnership of the American democracy and the way our country, the United States, gained its independence, and that which followed in the 1820's when the Greek nationals began their movement for independence.

□ 2000

What was the common bond that the American institution of independence had with its later Greek movement for independence in the 1820's? It was their own Greek heritage. That is, the ideals of democracy and self-government which were first practiced by the classical Greeks were the foundation for the Jeffersons and Madisons and the Adamses and the Washingtons as they moved strenuously to bring their country into a mode of freedom. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution that followed all were based in the authorship of the American Founders themselves, founded on the principles of classical Greek democracy, Athenian democracy.

And so 50 years later, when Greece itself felt the need to overthrow the yoke of Turkish domination, they were harking back to two historical events: First, the American independence movement and, still further back, in

which both democracies had relied so heavily, the classical Greek democracy.

So how did I learn this lesson? In the parochial setting of our Greek school, church-related studies, it became evident to me that America was as much a part of the Greek revolution in 1821 as was the raising of the flag by Father Germanos and all the heroic exploits of the great generals of Greek independence.

As a matter of fact, in the city of Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, the public officials of that day in the 1820's spoke mightily of the need for the international community to come to the aid of the Greek independence movement. And in fact President Monroe, on many occasions, was insistent upon American spiritual and moral and material aid for the potential overthrow of the Turkish domination of Greece.

Members of the House of Representatives in which we stand tonight were eloquent in their phraseology of freedom, just as the gentleman from Florida began his dissertation this evening, with the celebration of freedom. His predecessors and mine on the floor of the House of Representatives in the 1820's were repetitive and strongly exhortative of the movement of freedom on the Greek mainland.

So when the gentleman says, as he does rightly, that this is a celebration of freedom, it is a celebration of American freedom just as much as it is this small setting of Greek independence that arose in the 1820's. That is what makes it so extraordinarily valuable to us of Greek descent, Americans of Greek descent. Here we are, privileged enough to be Members of the Congress of the United States where our every day, our every breath is spent in trying to improve our country, the United States. And it happens that our heritage, the parents that we had who came from another world and from another era, were able to inculcate in us the spirit of freedom and independence and democracy which they and their forefathers knew so well in their country of origin, and then they make sure that we in our education, in our commitment to faith, in our interrelationships with our fellow Americans, that we never forget that the spirit of freedom that began with that wonderful Athenian democracy can be practiced by their sons and daughters on the very floor of the most, the strongest station of freedom that the world has ever known, the Congress of the United States.

I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. He is always so very eloquent on all subjects, I might add.

I now yield to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PAPPAS], one of our newest Members of the House, very welcome here.

Mr. PAPPAS. Mr. Speaker, I proudly rise today and join my distinguished

colleague and dear friend from Florida in recognizing the great achievement of the 176th anniversary of Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire.

Over 200 years ago, America's Founding Fathers turned to Greece, the birthplace of democracy, as an idol in setting the course as a new nation. It was only fitting that Greece in turn look to the United States 50 years later as a role model for democratic government after struggling under the oppressive Ottoman Empire.

Living under the rule of the Ottoman Empire fostered a revolutionary spirit in its people who had been subjected to decades of slavery, abuse, and cultural deprivation. It is this spirit that we recognize today. We recognize the spirit of Greeks that have gone on before, the Greeks that have brought so much to this country and those Greek-Americans living here today.

A well-known Greek revolutionary who was burned alive by the Turks said in one of his famous poems that "I would rather live free for one hour than suffer slavery and imprisonment for 40 years."

The United States-Greek relationship is among our strongest. Greece has fought by the side of the United States in numerous tests throughout the years. Both countries share a passion for freedom. Greece has sent some of its brightest to the shores of America to pursue dreams in this, the land of opportunity.

My grandparents emigrated to the United States of America early in this century. My mother's parents, Stelios and Olga Macaronis, were born in a village called Atsiki on the island of Lemnos in the Aegean Sea. My paternal grandmother, Anastasia Pappas, was from Athens, and my father's father, whose name was Mike Pappas, was born in Smyrna, which is now part of Turkey.

They worked hard to learn the language and supported a growing family. They became U.S. citizens. They started businesses. They had children and, yes, they had grandchildren. One of these grandchildren today is a Member of the U.S. Congress.

The United States has given our Greek-American family the opportunity to see these dreams come through. As a Member of this Congress, I share the responsibility to ensure that the opportunity for the realization of these types of dreams will always be possible for others.

Winning the election last year to the U.S. Congress was a great responsibility or is a great responsibility and honor. However, in reading the papers the day after the election, my favorite pictures are not the ones with me and my supporters at the election celebration. It was the pictures of me taking my grandmother, Olga Macaronis, to vote just as I have done for many years.

My grandmother, Olga Macaronis, is 94 years old today, and I do not think that she has ever missed an election in

her many years since becoming a citizen. While taking her to vote to the polls, you can sense her sense of civic duty. I guess the respect and sense of responsibility rubbed off on me, and that is part of the reason why I became involved in public service.

Another great quality that you cannot help but notice within the Greek-American community is its strong entrepreneurial spirit. Not only strong businesses but strong families, churches, and communities.

The reason I come to the well of this Chamber and talk a lot about tax relief, regulatory relief, small businesses, and balancing our budget is because of the basic commonsense upbringing that I had in a small business with my dad, Jim Pappas, or talking to my friends like George and Peter Stavriandis. The tight interrelationship between family, friends and community businesses is critically important to all Greek Americans.

As a new Member of Congress, I am very honored to see so many leaders on both sides of the political aisle recognize the significance of the United States-Greek relationship. I hope to add to this as the newest Member of this Congress of Greek descent.

Greece has survived through a lot of turmoil over the years and has reached maturity because of its people: proud, God-fearing, freedom-loving, and, yes, peaceful. And that has nourished and upheld the ideals on which their modern nation was conceived on March 25, 1821. It is this heritage that we, the thousands of Greek-Americans, bring to the United States of America.

I want to thank my colleague and friend from Florida, chairman of the Hellenic Caucus, for the opportunity to address this issue which is so close to my heart.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for doing so very well.

The Greek struggle for independence, as has already been related by Mr. GEKAS and Mr. PAPPAS, is filled with stories of heroes and acts of heroism. It is the story of the Hydriots, seafarers who broke the Ottoman naval blockade. It is the story of Bishop Germanos of Patras who raised the Greek flag at the Peloponnese Monastery of Agias Lavras and cried out, Eleftheria I Thanotos, liberty or death.

It is the story of Philhellenes, like Lord Byron, who gave his life for this cause. It is also the story of U.S. President James Monroe, who said the following in his 1822 State of the Union Address, and I quote:

The mention of Greece fills the mind with the most exalted sentiments and arouses in our bosoms the best feelings of which our nature is susceptible. That such a country should have been overwhelmed and so long hidden, as it were, from the world under a gloomy despotism has been a cause of unceasing and deep regret to generous minds for ages past. A strong hope is entertained that these people will recover their independence and resume their equal station among the nations of the earth.

These acts of courage, Mr. Speaker, and the words of President Monroe serve to highlight an important bond between America and Greece: the love of freedom. Like our Founding Fathers, the Greek people sought the right to govern themselves and to determine their own destiny. They felt that there is nothing more precious than freedom and democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE].

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I just want to begin as I do every year, by thanking the gentleman from Florida [Mr. BILIRAKIS] for organizing this hour to honor the anniversary of Greek independence day. As you know, he is the chairman of the Hellenic caucus. He works tirelessly and is an outspoken champion really of Greek-American relations. I thank him for his tireless effort to strengthen the ties between our two countries.

I just wanted to say, many of us here in Congress are staunchly committed to preserving and strengthening the ties between the Greek and the American people. It is very important. I think sometimes people diminish the significance of these commemorative evenings as we are having now, but I think it is very important that we speak out and talk about Greek independence day and talk about the ties that bind the Greek and the American people.

I usually try to find a quote for this occasion. And I just wanted to mention, I found one from Daniel Webster, who just 2 years after the Greek people began the revolution that would lead to their freedom, mentioned, and this is a quote, he talked about the oppression that the Greeks were having to deal with under rule by the Ottoman Empire and he said, and I quote, "This, the Greek people, a people of intelligence, ingenuity, refinement, spirit and enterprise, have been for centuries under the atrocious and unparalleled barbarism that ever oppressed the human race."

If you think of Congressman Webster's words in describing the Greek people, intelligence, ingenuity, refinement, spirit and enterprise, they are certainly no less apt today as they were when he said those words, I guess it is, I do not know how many years ago. I am sure it is over 100 years ago now.

The other thing that I think we need to point out and we have and Mr. BILIRAKIS has many times is how Greece has been a staunch military ally of the United States in World War I. In War II, when Hitler's war machine was decimating Europe, Greece joined the United States to repulse perhaps the greatest threat to freedom the world has ever seen.

We hear about the historic battle of Crete in which the spirit of the Greek people forced Hitler to delay his planned invasion of Russia, one of the most important battles of the Second World War. Of course, in the aftermath

of the Second World War, Greece became a NATO ally and has been to this day joining forces with the United States and played no small role in preserving and protecting the freedoms enjoyed by an unprecedented number of the world's people.

The other thing that I think about is the contribution that Greek-Americans have made to this country. If you think about Webster's words again, these values that have guided the Greek Americans to the top of some of the Nation's most competitive professions, law, the arts, entertainment, the sporting world, education and medicine and, of course, government, we see so many Greek-American Congressmen here tonight and in the Congress, but perhaps the most enduring of Greek qualities is that of endurance itself.

The Greeks gave the world democracy, and today the world is as free as it ever has been. There are more democracies now than there ever have been, I think, historically. Four hundred years of control by the Ottoman Empire could not, as Webster observed, overcome the Greek people's determination to be free. And this is no less advisable in modern times.

□ 2015

I just wanted to mention Cyprus, because for almost 23 years now Greece has stood firm in its determination to bring freedom and independence to the illegally occupied nation of Cyprus. Like their forefathers, who were under the control of a hostile foreign power for four centuries, the Cypriot people hold fast in defiance of their Turkish aggressors with every confidence that they will again be a sovereign nation. And I believe they will, and the United States will be by their side in both the fight to secure that freedom and the celebration to mark the day when it finally arrives.

I want to say in conclusion, again, to congratulate the Greek people for 176 years of independence, thank them for their contributions to American life, and thank the gentleman again, Mr. BILIRAKIS, for making sure that we do this special order every year on a regular basis.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for again joining in this special order, this remembrance and this celebration.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say at this time that the gentlewoman from New York [Mrs. MALONEY], my cochairman of the Hellenic caucus, was on the floor, but she took ill and had to leave and asked me to insert her remarks in the RECORD, and I do miss her attendance here today and her participation.

But Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from California [Mr. FILNER] is with us today and I would recognize him at this time.

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and like the previous speakers, I thank Mr. BILIRAKIS for this annual special order in which we take some time to remember our relationship and our debt to the people and the

nation of Greece. It is a privilege and an honor to participate with him.

We all know that March 25 will mark the 176th anniversary of the struggle that ultimately freed the Greek people from the Ottoman Empire. Back then, in 1821, the Greeks raised the flag of revolution against 400 years of Turkish rule and began a series of wars that lasted a full decade and resulted in freedom for the nation of Greece.

We look to Greece for many of our cultural attributes, whether it is science, literature, art, architecture, philosophy. For over 2,000 years we have looked to Greece for inspiration.

Before I entered this Chamber, Mr. BILIRAKIS, I taught a course on the history of science at the university level; spent a good part of that course on the contributions of ancient Greece.

It was in the 6th and 5th century B.C. that the Athenians and the Greeks living in the Ionian cities for the first time asked rational questions about the natural world we live in and demanded rational answers. Whether it was on the structure of the universe or the nature of the human body, they invented what we call science. The process that they began back then, in fact, became the most productive and the most profound method of trying to discover truth in the world, and we owe the Greeks that.

We look at Greeks, of course, foremost for the model of democracy that they gave us. I think every democratic nation on earth, past and present, has owed a debt to the Greeks, who said that human beings can rule themselves. We have the capacity, we have the intelligence to, in fact, rule ourselves. We do not have to look at kings, we do not have to look at outside forces. We can do it ourselves.

As the gentleman knows, there was some debate earlier on spending limits. I think the Greeks might have laughed at that. They believed, in terms of their democracy, that everybody who was a citizen could serve in their assembly or other offices, and they chose their leaders each year by lot, by random selection. There were no campaigns for office that they had to put campaign spending limits on. Term limits were also built into their system. An individual served for a year and then returned to their job, and it seemed to work very well, at least for the cities of Greece at that time.

Our Founding Fathers certainly looked to the Greek model of democracy as they drafted our Constitution. During World War II, as we have heard, Americans and Greeks stood shoulder to shoulder in the battlefields of Europe as we fought for freedom. And certainly in recent years Americans and Greeks have watched with pride as nations all over the world have rejected tyranny and embraced the democratic ideals we both share. Americans and Greeks alike understand the importance of supporting the seeds of democracy around the world and working toward a day when everyone is permitted

the rights and liberties that our country so cherishes.

Mr. Speaker, Greek Independence Day celebrates the fight against oppression and the struggle for freedom. We thank the gentleman again for helping us to remember that each year. This weekend when I go back to San Diego, I am proud to be joining the Greek community in my hometown for a grand celebration of Greek Independence Day, and I wish the entire Greek-American community a joyous celebration of Greek and American democracy.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his very profound remarks and for participating in this special order. And I suppose maybe the most draconian but possibly best form of campaign reform might be the lot process. I am not sure whether we would all agree that that is the way we should go.

Continuing on, Mr. Speaker, at one time or another we have all read the passionate and stirring words of our American patriot Patrick Henry. It was 222 years ago on March 23, 1775, that Mr. Henry admonished all of history when he proclaimed, and I quote, "Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death." We all learned that certainly in our schooling.

This same yearning for freedom, Mr. Speaker, would echo throughout the hearts and minds of every Greek patriot fighting for liberty. As these Greek freedom fighters boldly challenged Ottoman-Turk domination, they too proclaimed the defiant battle cry, "eletheria I thanatos!" Liberty or death.

During this battle for freedom rose the exceptional figure of Demetrios Ypsilantis. In 1825, Ypsilantis, along with 300 soldiers, defended the Castle of Argos for 3 days against an army of 30,000 Turks. After they had exhausted their ammunition, Ypsilantis, along with his 300 men, secretly escaped through Turkish lines without any losses.

This brave feat moved the whole world. The story reached as far as the United States. In fact, so inspired were the inhabitants of a new town in Michigan that they decided to name the town after Ypsilantis. Today the town of Ypsilantis, MI, has 30,000 people and a statue of Demetrios Ypsilantis still stands next to the old water tower.

This epic account certainly illustrates the common bond and heritage that both the United States and Greece share. The relationship between our two countries is based on mutual respect and admiration.

Like many Americans, Mr. Speaker, I am the son of immigrants who taught me a great love for the United States. I am proud that the values of freedom and democracy that we as Americans hold so dear originated in ancient

Greece. We are all reminded that these democratic principles born so long in Greece were embraced by our Founding Fathers. Others have said this. It is an example of the ancient Greeks that we recognize each March the 25th.

We also celebrate the return of democracy to Greece on this day of glory for the Greek people. The spirit of democracy lives on. Many today continue to give their lives in order to defend its principles. We owe it to those defenders of democracy that we honor the freedom and independence of Greece on the floor of the House of Representatives here tonight, the world's greatest hall of democracy. In doing so, I think that we reaffirm the democratic heritage that Greece and the United States have shared throughout the years.

These principles are not uniquely Greek or American. However, our battles for democracy have given courage to the rest of the world. Freedom and independence form a legacy that we cherish and have a responsibility to protect and to defend. We must ensure that the light of liberty shines bright throughout the world. Wherever it is not, we have a responsibility to share our example.

Unfortunately, today liberty is not shining in all parts of the world. One need only to look at the current civil unrest in Albania or the dictatorship in Cuba to realize that more work must be done. While the Berlin Wall has been dismantled and Russia has been opened to the world, the Nicosia wall continues to divide the country of Cyprus.

Mr. Speaker, we must stop this senseless division. A divided Cyprus only serves to fuel more tension between Greece and Turkey. In fact, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in her own testimony before the House Committee on International Relations stated that, and I quote her words, "The dispute divides more than two Cypriot communities; it continues to act as a wedge between two NATO allies, Turkey and Greece. In doing so, it threatens European stability and our vital interests."

According to Secretary Albright, the United States, and I quote her, "Is prepared to play a larger role in promoting a resolution to the conflict."

As lovers of freedom, Americans cannot continue to tolerate the aggressive behavior of Turkey, which still suppresses the light of liberty in Cyprus. As we celebrate democracy today, let us remember that our fight is not over; that more work must be done, but that together we can ensure that freedom and democracy comes to Cyprus.

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, this is the 176th anniversary of Greek independence, following 400 years of control by the Ottoman Empire. As the birthplace of democracy, America has a special debt to Greece.

America is committed to Greece as an ally in the fight for freedom and democracy. That commitment was renewed by the Truman doctrine and more recently within the NATO community.

America also is indebted to the great service of the Greek-American community, including Members of this House such as Congressman BILIRAKIS.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join with my colleagues to pay tribute to Greece, a nation that has contributed much to the civilized world. On March 25, we celebrate the 176th anniversary of Greek independence.

It was on this day in 1821 that, as one of the stories goes, Bishop Germanos of Patras declared in St. George's Square "Eleftheria l(ee) Thanatos": Freedom or death. The phrase became the battle cry of the Greeks and all who came to their aid in the ensuing revolution to end 400 years of Ottoman rule.

More than 2,000 years after it brought forth the concept of democracy, Greece would begin its long struggle for independence, and the right to claim for itself that which it had so selflessly given to the rest of the free world: governance by the people. It is the etymology of the word "democracy": "demos" meaning people, "kratos" meaning state, hence the people's state.

Half way around the world, another young nation was in the midst of its growing pains. The United States of America, barely 45 years old in 1821, was putting into practice, the principles of ancient Greece. The ideals of Greek democracy were not lost on our forefathers who drew inspiration from the ancient traditions. "To the Ancient Greeks," said Thomas Jefferson, "we are all indebted for the light which led ourselves out of Gothic darkness."

Time and again, the Greeks have shown themselves to be fierce protectors of democratic ideals. During World War II, in the mountains of northern Greece, shepherds turned rebel fighters used the terrain and meager arms to baffle the Axis and slow the Nazi march into the Balkans. One in seven Greeks died for freedom during the war.

In times of peace and prosperity too, the contributions of the Greek community are immeasurable. Greek-Americans have played a significant role in all aspects to American life. Here in this Chamber, the children of Greek immigrants have brought their legacy and inspiration, and have made this place a better one for their contributions. The social fabric that is San Francisco would be less vibrant, less vital were it not for the presence of the Greek-American community which has worked tirelessly in the best interests of diversity.

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in celebration of Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire. March 25, 1997, will mark the 176th anniversary of the start of Greece's struggle for independence. A historic series of uprisings against the Greek's Turkish oppressors began on this day. Soon the nation would erupt into a revolution attracting international attention and support.

The struggle of the Greek people against the Ottoman Empire exemplifies the remarkable ability of a people to overcome all obstacles if the will to endure is strong enough and the goal, freedom, is bright enough.

Today, the United States of America represents what we know as true freedom and democracy. Although no nation is perfect in its policies, America is still considered the standard by which citizens around the world compare their own governments. People living under oppressive regimes have looked to the United States for generations to gain strength in their struggles to overcome their oppressors.

The parallels between the two countries, the United States and Greece, are remarkable. American political thought was influenced just as much by Greek [philosophy as the Greek revolution of 1821 was inspired by the American fight for freedom in 1776. In fact, Greek intellectuals translated our Declaration of Independence and used it as their own declaration. The incredible historical struggles we share have created a bond between our two nations that goes far beyond present day foreign relations, trade agreements and security pacts.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent a large and active Greek community in the Fifth District of Massachusetts. As a supporter of issues of concern in the Greek-American community, I would like to recognize this population and their interests. Greek civilization touches our lives as Americans, and enhances the cultural existence of this great Nation.

Mr. VISCLOSKEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the 176th anniversary of Greek Independence Day, which is on March 24. I use this occasion not only to mark Greek independence, but also to celebrate the unique relationship that exists between the Greek and American peoples.

As almost every school child knows, modern democracy has its roots in the ancient Athenian system of government that was developed over 2,500 years ago. While the democratic ideals developed during this time did not always rule in Greece, the writings of its leaders and philosophers have influenced generations of people in almost every country around the world.

Among those who were influenced by ancient Greek philosophers was American Founding Father Thomas Jefferson, who taught himself how to read Greek at an early age. In his adulthood, Jefferson called upon his knowledge of the Greek tradition of democracy when writing the Declaration of Independence and other important works, which were a catalyst to American independence from the British. Years later, Jefferson's writings helped inspire the Greek people to rise up and successfully win their independence from the Ottoman Empire—the very event that we celebrate today.

This close and symbiotic relationship continues to this day. Greece is one of the only countries to have supported the United States during every major international conflict this century, and it plays a vital role in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The United States, in turn, has worked to bring a peaceful solution to the situation on the island of Cyprus, which was brutally invaded by Turkey in 1974.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to join my colleagues in celebrating Greek Independence Day. I salute the Greek people for having the courage to break the bonds of oppression 176 years ago and I look forward to continued cooperation between our two nations. Finally, I would like to salute my distinguished colleague from Florida, Mr. BILIRAKIS, for arranging this special order today.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, in commemoration of March 25, 1997, the 176th anniversary of Greek independence from oppressive Ottoman rule, I would like to acknowledge and honor the tremendous contributions that the Greek people have made to the world. The invaluable scientific, philosophical, and cultural gifts of the Greek people are

countless, and all have come in spite of the historical adversity this determined nation has faced.

March 25, 1821, marked the Greek Declaration of Independence, a day ending almost 400 years of subjugation and persecution at the hands of the Ottoman Empire. Deprived of civil rights, as well as access to the educational and religious institutions for which they were famous, the Greeks waged a valiant war of independence to reacquire for themselves the vital rights they themselves had established for the rest of the world to enjoy.

The hard-won victory for independence has been followed by continuous adversity which the Greeks have repeatedly overcome and still been able to thrive. Greece has been a true friend to America and has aligned with the United States for every major conflict in the 20th century. This loyalty and dedication to the tenets of freedom did not come at a cheap price—over 600,000 Greeks lost their lives in World War II while fighting against the Axis Powers. Since that time, Greece again unflinchingly sided with the forces of democracy by joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] in 1952 in spite of Soviet threats of dire consequences for such action.

Greece continues to inspire the rest of the world with its persistent dedication to democracy and freedom, and it has particularly blessed the United States with 1.1 million Americans of Greek ancestry who continue to exemplify the importance of family, education, and hard work. Born right here in our Nation's Capital, Pete Sampras, the No. 1 tennis player in the world, is but one Greek-American whose work-ethic and determination epitomizes the rich heritage for which all Americans should be thankful.

I am proud to represent the many Greek-Americans living in the Seventh Congressional District of Pennsylvania and contributing to the diverse culture we enjoy. These hard-working families demonstrate the values and cohesion to which all Americans aspire.

As we look to March 25, let us bear in mind the tremendous sacrifices made by Greece and appreciate the democracy that we, as Americans, enjoy in large measure because of Greece's role as the birthplace of democracy.

Mr. MANTON. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to join my colleague and friend, Mr. BILIRAKIS, to mark the 176th anniversary of the revolution liberating the people of Greece from the nearly 400 years of domination by the Ottoman Empire.

We, as Americans, owe much to the country of Greece. The very foundation of our form of Government and the freedoms we enjoy are based upon the democratic teachings of early Greece. The Greek culture has played a crucial role in fostering freedom and democracy throughout the world. In the great words of Charles Eliot Norton, "A knowledge of Greek thought and life, and of the arts in which the Greeks expressed their thought and sentiment, is essential to high culture."

The relationship between Greece and the United States is one based on mutual respect and admiration. This is illustrated in Greece's national anthem, " * * * There was heartfelt joy in the land of Washington remembering the chains which had tied them too." Our Founding Fathers and the American Revolution served as ideals for the Greek people

when they began their modern fight for independence in the 1820's. The Greeks translated the United States Declaration of Independence into their own language so they could share in the same ideas of freedom as the United States.

Mr. Speaker, the relationship between the United States and Greece has continued and thrived in modern times. Greece is one of only three countries in the world that has been allied with the United States in every international conflict this century. More than 600,000 Greek soldiers died fighting against the Axis Powers during World War II. Many Greek soldiers continued their fight for freedom and democracy after World War II when they fought against Communist rebels who threatened the liberty of the Greek people, however, the Greeks were successful in ensuring the stability and strength of democracy in their victorious nation.

On this occasion of commemorating the unique and historic relationship between the United States and Greece, I invite my colleagues to join me as a Member of the Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues. It is an excellent chance for Members to work together in a bipartisan manner on issues which effect all Greeks and Greek-Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I intend to continue my strong commitment to the Greek Community on issues which effect them, including the permanent solution of the Cyprus problem; promoting a positive relationship between Greece and Macedonia; as well as ensuring that the countries of Turkey and Albania cease their infringement on human rights and violations of international law.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in celebrating the strong friendship between the people of the United States and Greece and pay tribute to the important contributions the Greek culture and Greek-Americans have made throughout the world.

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 176th anniversary of Greece's independence from the Ottoman Empire, and to celebrate the shared democratic heritage of Greece and the United States. I thank my colleague from Florida, Congressman BILIRAKIS, for organizing this special order and for his leadership on issues of importance to the Greek-American community.

On March 25, 1821, after more than 400 years of Ottoman Turk domination, Greece declared its independence and resumed its rightful place in the world as a beacon of democracy.

The people of Greece and the United States share a common bond in their commitment to democracy. Our Founding Fathers looked to the teachings of Greek philosophy in their struggle for freedom and democracy. And the American experience in turn inspired the Greek people who fought so hard for independence 176 years ago.

This bond between our two peoples stretches beyond the philosophy of democracy. The relationship between the United States and Greece has grown stronger and stronger through the years, and Greece remains today one of our most important allies.

And the contribution Greece makes to life in America is even stronger than the ties between our two countries. Greek-Americans are a vital part of our cultural heritage. My district in New York would not be what it is today without the valuable contributions made by the Greek-American community.

I am proud to stand today in commemoration of Greek independence and in recognition of the contribution Greece and Greek-Americans have made to our country.

Mr. LOBIONDO. Mr. Speaker, I rise as a member of the congressional caucus on Hellenic issues to again recognize Greek Independence Day. This is a day to honor the sacrifices made by the Greek people over hundreds of years in their struggle against the oppressive rule of the Ottoman Empire.

This day also reminds us that Greece and the United States share much in common, including the 1.1 million American citizens who are of Greek ancestry. I am pleased to join New Jersey's Greek-American citizens in their celebration.

Many artistic and intellectual traditions have been handed down to the people of the United States of America by the people of Greece. Our Nation is richer for these traditions, and we remain grateful to Greece.

The ties that bind America to Greece are not only historical, but also modern. Americans have fought side by side with Greeks in two world wars as well as in the Persian Gulf war. Today, Greece is our invaluable ally in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I call upon President Clinton and the Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, to make Greece—and the protection of Greeks in Cyprus and Turkey—a primary focus of United States foreign policy.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would ask all Members of the House to join with me in honoring the historical ties between the United States and Greece and in continuing to foster the close relationship between our two countries that has proven so successful.

Mr. LAFALCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate Greek Independence Day—a national day of celebration of Greek and American democracy. March 25 marks the 176th anniversary of the beginning of the revolution that freed the Greek people from the Ottoman Empire.

An historic bond exists between Greece and America, forged by our shared democratic heritage. America is truly indebted to the Ancient Greeks for giving the world the first example of democracy. As this neoclassically designed building provides a protected place for our own democratic government to flourish, the philosophical and democratic influences of the Ancient Greeks provides the inspiration. It is therefore fitting that Members of this Chamber join in paying tribute to the long struggle for freedom that Greece endured.

On March 25, 1821, when Germanos, the archbishop of Patros, proclaimed Greek independence, another link between Greece and the United States was forged. The American Revolution served as a model for the Greek struggle for freedom, and the Declaration of Independence, translated into Greek, served as the declaration of the end of the Greek struggle in 1830.

The interconnection between Greek and American democracies lies not only in the philosophical underpinnings of our government, but in many areas of American life. The English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley once said, "We are all Greeks! Our laws, our literature, our religion, our art, have their roots in Greece." The tremendous influence that Greece has had on American life continues today through the activities of the dynamic Greek community in America. In every field—

politics, entertainment, business, and education—Greek-Americans continue to make a valuable contribution to American life.

I am honored to pay tribute to the Greek community on the anniversary of their independence day.

Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island. Mr. Speaker, today is a great day in Greece's history for we are once again celebrating the independence of Greece, one of our Nation's closest allies. I want to commend the gentleman from Florida, for assembling this special order and for organizing the congressional caucus on Hellenic issues. I am pleased to be part of an organized and concerted effort to speak out on those issues which are important to Greece, Cyprus, and our constituents of Hellenic descent.

It is time to celebrate the beginning of Greece's struggle for independence from the oppression of the Ottoman Empire. The people of Greece began their struggle for freedom on March 25, 1821. The colonists of America offered an example to Greece in the struggle against oppression, and, also, Athenian democracy was an inspiration to our revolutionary heroes.

Today, we honor the ties between these two countries. Each day that we meet is a celebration of the debt America owes to Greece for founding the idea of democracy. We pay homage to this every day when we meet and debate and vote and freely share ideas.

Furthermore, there is much to be attributed to the hard work of the sons and daughters of Greece who have come to the United States have made a tremendous impact on their communities.

In my State of Rhode Island, there are incredibly strong and productive Greek communities. Since the turn of the century, Greek immigrants have settled in Providence, Pawtucket, and Newport, RI. There they built businesses, neighborhoods, churches, schools, and raised families. Rhode Island is richer because of all they have given.

Today, we celebrate what Ancient Greece gave to the founding of our Nation, the success of the Greek Independence movement, and what Greek-Americans have devoted to the development of the United States. I thank my colleagues for all of their hard work in making this special order possible and look forward to further work with the Hellenic caucus.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to rise to speak on this occasion which marks a day of historical significance for Americans and all who revere the blessings which a democratic way of life have afforded us. I thank the gentleman from Florida [Mr. BILIRAKIS] for organizing this special order, and I wish to let him know how much we appreciate his efforts in the House to keep Hellenic issues before us.

On March 25th, Greece will celebrate the 176th anniversary of its declaration of independence from foreign domination. We revere and honor the contribution that Greek civilization has made to our democratic traditions.

The cause of Greek independence and the adherence of the Greek nation to the path of democracy and true respect for the will of the people to determine their political course has always been dear to the hearts of democrats (with a small d) everywhere. Modern Greece rekindled the flame of democracy that first burned in the hearts of the citizens of ancient

Athens when it threw off the tyrannical yoke of the Ottoman overlords in 1821, an act that inspired all the peoples of Europe and this hemisphere.

Mr. FROST. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to again rise in support of our annual special order in recognition of Greek Independence Day.

Today, as we pay tribute to the movement for Greek independence that began 176 years ago, I would like to espouse the importance of this island nation to the lives of all Americans. Greece has been called the birthplace of democracy, having contributed much to the structure of our society and to the establishment of this very institution. While today we may take it for granted, the concept of majority rule with full respect for the rights of the minority was first developed in ancient Greece. This notion is deeply embedded in our own Declaration of Independence and Constitution. Today, as we struggle with problems and crises that were unimaginable two thousand years ago, we are guided by the philosophies of ancient Greece.

Of course, the influence of Greece continues to this day. Here in the United States and throughout the world, Greek-Americans continue to make significant contributions to all aspects of our culture.

So, in recognition of all of the achievements and contributions the Greek people have made to this country and toward the betterment of the human race, I salute Greece in their celebration of independence and freedom.

In particular, we in America are gratified by Greece's role as a close American ally, and by the contribution that the Greek-American community makes to this country—and we only have to look around this chamber to see our members of Greek heritage with whom I know we are all proud to serve. We also appreciate the role that Greece plays as a stable anchor in the heart of the turbulent Balkans as anarchy wracks its neighbor to the north, Albania.

Mr. Speaker, we look to Greece to continue to play the strong and responsible role it has played in assuring that the Aegean and eastern Mediterranean remain a region of peace and stability. I trust that our government will also continue to support a free, prosperous, and strong Greece. I urge all our members to join in wishing the people and government of Greece our best wishes and heartfelt hopes for a bright future.

Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to join with my colleagues to celebrate the 176th anniversary of Greek Independence Day, a day in which the United States and Greece share our democratic ideals. Our mutual respect for freedom and liberty dates back to the late 18th century when our Founding Fathers looked to ancient Greece for direction in writing our own Constitution. Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson persuaded a noted Greek scholar, John Paradise, to come to the United States for consultation on the political philosophy of democracy. As a result of this earlier friendship, the Greeks adopted the American Declaration of Independence as their own, sealing a bond which has endured between our two nations ever since.

For Greek-Americans and those who practice the Greek Orthodox faith, March 25 marks the date when in 1821, the Greek people rose against four centuries of Ottoman rule. Under the leadership of Alexander Ypsilanti, the

Greek people fought valiantly in pursuit of freedom and self-rule for eight years. Finally, in 1827, the Allied powers lent support to the Greek effort. In 1829, not only did the united forces defeat the Turks, but the Greek people also gained recognition of their independence by the very power that had oppressed them since the Fifteenth Century.

The Greek people continued their struggle against the threat of undemocratic regimes into the 20th century. At the height of World War II, when it appeared that Nazi forces would soon overrun Europe, the Greek people fought courageously on behalf of the rest of the world—at a cost of a half a million lives. The Greek people dealt a severe blow to the ability of the Axis forces to control the Mediterranean and sealed off the Black Sea which helped to turn the tide of World War II.

Today, Greece is still threatened by outside forces and knows too well that freedom and independence come at a price—vigilance. While March 25 marks Greece's accomplishment as an independent nation, it also symbolizes the Greek people's continued defense of democracy, an idea given birth by the great philosophers in Athens more than 2,500 years ago. Greece's presence as a free and lasting democracy in an often unstable region of former totalitarian states is one reason why some of the infant democracies of the Balkans may yet survive and flourish. In fact, just this week, the Greek government sent humanitarian aid to her strife torn neighbor, Albania. Greece remains a shining example of democracy in the Balkans.

Once again, I am grateful for the opportunity to join my colleagues and my constituents in observing this very important celebration. Each March, I remember where America's own democratic principles were derived, and I honor the invaluable contributions Greek-Americans have brought to this country. The more than 700,000 Greeks who have come here, have benefitted us with a stronger, civilized and more cultured heritage. Mr. Speaker, I salute Greece and Greek-Americans for their outstanding achievements and their commitment to the ideals of freedom.

Mr. DOYLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Greek Independence Day.

Throughout the 20th century, Greece has stood strong, first in the face of imperialism during World War I, then against the Fascist incursion of the Axis Powers during World War II, and finally in facing down the Communist threat during the cold war.

The shared victory of Western democracies in defeating communism would not have been possible without the dedicated participation of Greece. Also, as Americans, we must continue to recognize the pivotal role played by Greece in meeting our goal of maintaining and enhancing the economic and political stability of Europe and the Mediterranean.

Greece continues to stand firm as a bulwark of stability in an otherwise volatile region. Just today, Prime Minister Costos Simitis has called for a summit of Balkan leaders to deal with the crisis in Albania. It is this type of action—working for regional stability when it is most needed—that clearly demonstrates the important role the people and Government of Greece continue to play in the modern world.

Again, I congratulate the people of Greece on their ongoing positive contribution to peace and democracy throughout the world, and wish them all the best on their independence day.

Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the Greek community to celebrate the 176th anniversary of Greek independence.

On March 25, 1821, the Archbishop of Patras blessed the Greek flag at the Aghia Lavra Monastery near Kalavrita, marking the beginning of the Greek war of independence in which nearly 400 years of Ottoman rule were turned aside.

Ancient Greece was the birthplace of democratic values. It brought forth the notion that the ultimate power to govern belongs in the hands of the people. It inspired a system of checks and balances to ensure that one branch of government does not dominate any other branch.

These ideals inspired our Founding Fathers as they wrote the Constitution. In the words of Thomas Jefferson, "to the ancient Greeks * * * we are all indebted for the light which led ourselves out of Gothic darkness."

Today, the United States is enriched not only by Greek principles but also by its sons and daughters. Greek-Americans have made major contributions to American society, including our arts, sports, medicine, religion, and politics.

My home State of Michigan has been enhanced by the Greek community. In Macomb and St. Clair Counties, we are served by St. John's Greek Orthodox Church and Assumption Greek Orthodox Church. These institutions provide a multitude of community services and add to the rich diversity of the area.

Mr. Speaker, I join the people of Greece and those of Greek ancestry around the world celebrating Greek Independence Day. I salute all of them for the tremendous contributions to freedom and human dignity which they have made.

Mr. COYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join in this special order commemorating Greek Independence Day.

In 1821, 176 years ago, the Greek people undertook a prolonged, uncertain, and painful struggle to win their independence. The cause of Greek independence required nearly 10 years of courage, persistence, and sacrifice. The price of freedom was very heavy. In the end, however, the Greek people were successful in winning their freedom and establishing an independent nation.

Congress recognizes Greek Independence Day because we believe that it is important to commemorate the struggle of the Greek people to secure the right of democratic self-government. This triumph in itself is significant as a testament to the importance of freedom, but given the special place that Greece holds in world history as the birthplace of democracy, the story of the 19th-century Greek struggle for independence takes on added poignancy. Congress also recognizes Greek Independence Day because the concepts of personal liberty and self-government that were developed in ancient Greece were subsequently adopted by 17th- and 18th-century philosophers and formed the basis for the political beliefs that fueled the French and American Revolutions.

Greece and the United States have much in common. Greece and the United States can each legitimately claim to be the cradle of democracy. Each country's legacy inspired patriots of the other country in their struggle for independence. And each country has had an important influence on Western culture and modern intellectual thought. Moreover, both

the Greek and the American people share many common qualities—qualities like energy, creativity, entrepreneurship, and courage. It should, then, come as no surprise that Greek Independence Day is being observed today in the U.S. House of Representatives. I am pleased to join my colleagues and our country's Greek-American citizens in celebrating Greek Independence Day.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer my congratulations and support to the nation of Greece and Greek descendants everywhere in the celebration of Greek Independence Day. As a nation that has played and continues to play a dramatic and important historical role, Greece deserves our every respect and admiration on their day of independence.

Ancient Greece served as a model for many ideas that have transformed the world for the better. Two of those ideas, democracy and the Olympic games, serve to bring people together in the spirit of friendly debate and competition, and bring out the best in everyone involved.

When our Founding Fathers looked to the lessons of the ancients and their system of government in order to build a government that could both respond to the people's concerns and stand the test of time, they used the Greek system of government as their primary inspiration. When Thomas Jefferson wrote "I consider the people who constitute a society or nation as the source of all authority in that nation," he was building on the example that the ancient Greeks set over 2,000 years ago.

This body's bipartisan retreat last weekend in Hershey, PA, was certainly an example of where the Greeks inspired us to work together. The Olympics have always been an opportunity for athletes to put aside their differences and compete honestly and in the spirit of fair play. Our work together in Hershey was an effort to bring that way of thinking back to this body, and I'd like to think that the spirit of the Greeks watched over us at that retreat and guided our actions to produce better and more civilized debate about the issues that we are working on.

I represent a large number of Greek descendants, and the Greek community is a very active one in my hometown of Portland, OR. Their contribution to our culture and our community is an overwhelmingly positive one, and it is one I enjoy taking part in every year. Today, I am happy to honor not only the members of the Greek community in my district, but around the State of Oregon and the nation, by celebrating their nation's independence day.

Mr. BLAGOJEVICH. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the 200,000 Greek Americans of Chicagoland, I am proud to pay tribute to the 176th anniversary of Greek Independence Day. There is a rich heritage to be celebrated by all Americans and those who enjoy the freedoms of democracy across the world.

Greek-Americans have played a vital role in shaping the progress of the city of Chicago. Their leadership in areas including commerce, civics, the arts, and education has extended far beyond the benefits of their historic legacy of democracy. They are good neighbors and citizens who share a culture for which Chicagoans hold the deepest affection. Recently undergoing a wonderful restoration to host America at the Democratic National Convention, our city's Greek Town community has

come to be nationally renowned for its authenticity and devotion to ethnic tradition.

And while I am proud to be a part of a Nation that recognizes the contributions of Greek-Americans and the fundamental significance of this historic day, I am quick to remember that this is a spirit to which we must be true each and every day. A spirit that must never be forgotten or taken for granted for a single moment. Ironically, Greece is one nation that knows this only too well.

For over 20 long years, the world has shared the outrage felt by the residents of Cyprus whose land has been illegally occupied by Turkish forces, and shared the pain of the families of the 1,619 Greek Cypriots who are still missing from the invasion. In the midst of our celebration of the freedoms we enjoy as a result of Greece's contributions to society, we must not overlook this issue.

In honor of all those who have struggled in the cause for democracy, I ask that we renew our commitment to reaching a fair resolution to the conflict in Cyprus.

Until then, I wish all of the Greek-Americans of Chicago and across the Nation a very happy Greek Independence Day. On this and every day, their invaluable contributions to our society will not be forgotten.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join in recognition of the 176th anniversary of the independence of Greece.

Greek Independence Day, which is celebrated in a variety of ways nationwide, commemorates the birth of modern Greece. Whether the festivities take the form of parades, dances, songs, or feasts, the common thread of freedom runs through all activities. The battle for liberty fought by the Greeks ended with the triumph of democracy. This struggle has significant relevance for the United States. Sacrificing for the principle of democracy is a fundamental value Greece and the United States share.

The commemoration of Greek Independence Day also represents the special relationship between Greece and the United States. The bond reaches back to the early 19th century when Americans went to aid Greece in their war of independence. Now, approaching the 21st century, we're embarking upon a reinvigorated alliance. Sharing in the NATO partnership and working toward a sustained peace in the Balkans are two prominent examples of this relationship.

Another praiseworthy element exemplified by Greek Independence Day is community involvement. In the United States, Greek-Americans make invaluable contributions to the cultural, educational, and social fabric of American society. As a lifelong New Yorker, I know firsthand about the robust civic spirit the Greek-American community embodies. The hard work demonstrated by the many volunteers to put the Greek Independence Day celebrations together represents this strong sense of community. All members of the Greek community should be very proud of the multiplicity of events celebrating Greek Independence Day.

I want to thank my colleague from Florida, Mr. BILIRAKIS, for organizing this special order to celebrate Greek Independence Day. We should take this moment to salute the heroic feats of Greeks in their struggle for independence, recognize the strong bonds that exist between the United States and Greece, and applaud the contribution Greek-Americans make to communities across the country.

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join with my colleagues in paying tribute to Greek Independence Day.

Some 61 years ago President Franklin Delano Roosevelt remarked that, "In the truest sense freedom cannot be bestowed, it must be achieved." It is this very achievement, the embrace of liberty by the Greek nation, that we celebrate here today. And in a sense, today we celebrate not only the 176th year of Greek independence, but we honor the ideals upon which independence was secured in 1821. Values like honor, dedication, and perseverance were the call-words in the establishment of an independent Greek state.

For the thousands of Greek-Americans living in my congressional district, this day is representative of the determination of the Greek people to secure freedom against all odds. After being under Ottoman rule for four centuries, the Greek people realized their national aspirations by securing their independence in 1821. It was that realization that began a new era for Greece and has resulted in a warm relationship with the United States of America.

Today, Greece is a prosperous country and a fully engaged member of NATO and the European Union. And today, in all walks of life, Greek-Americans continue to make remarkable contributions to our country in the arts, humanities, and the areas of sport and commerce.

Mr. Speaker, as a strong supporter of issues dear to the Greek-American community, I am proud to recognize Greek Independence Day and I wish to extend on this special day my congratulations to all Greek-Americans and all the citizens of Greece.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am honored to join my colleagues today in remembering the 176th anniversary Greek Independence Day. I especially wish to thank my friend and fellow Floridian, Congressman MIKE BILIRAKIS, and my other good friend, Congresswoman CAROLYN MALONEY, for calling the special order to raise the public's awareness of the history of Greece and the important role Greece has played in the United States and the world.

When we celebrate Greek Independence Day we need to note that March 25 is not the day that all of Greece gained its independence. March 25 was the day that Athens and a small portion of Greece gained independence and then areas populated by Greeks were liberated one by one until we have the Greece of today.

It has often been said Greece's great gift to the United States and to the world is the governmental system of democracy. Well that is indeed a great gift which has brought much happiness to the world. But, it was the Greek courage, spirit and desire for liberty which helped the world to understand that democracy is the best way for people to join together in common association.

The Greek people, through their history, have shown an indomitable will to fight for their freedom. The Greek victories are well known throughout history. There was the Greek war for independence that freed part of Greece from the Ottoman Empire and later during World War II the Nazi invaders. But Greeks have suffered less known tragedies that would have broken the spirit or destroyed a lesser people.

Today Greek minorities in Turkey and other places in Eastern Europe are suffering political

and religious persecution. That is why this special order is so important. In addition to reminding the American people of their roots to the cradle of democracy in Greece, we need to continue raising the public's awareness of the constant threat Greeks live under in Eastern Europe.

The Greek Cypriots in occupied northern Cyprus live under intolerable inhuman conditions since their land was occupied by a military force. Tensions continue to rise around Cyprus and I urge the administration to apply the same degree of commitment to finding a peaceful solution to the Cyprus crisis that it applied to the Bosnian crisis.

I introduced legislation last Congress to help relieve the suffering of the enclaved Greek Cypriots and am considering similar legislation in this Congress. We must end the senseless persecution of these brave people. I just hope that the administration does not allow this situation to continue to fester hoping it will go away.

Mr. Speaker, the link between the United States and Greece is a strong bond and I believe the United States should thank the Greek people for not just being a good ally to America but for their gifts of our heritage of democracy and individual liberty. I am happy to join my colleagues in celebrating this joyous anniversary.

Again, I thank my friends Congressman BILIRAKIS and Congresswoman MALONEY for calling this special order and for their leadership on Hellenic issues.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I first of all want to thank the gentleman from Florida [Mr. BILIRAKIS] for organizing this special order to celebrate Greek Independence Day.

I am very fortunate and very pleased and privileged to represent Astoria, NY—one of the largest and most vibrant communities of Greek and Cypriot Americans in this country.

It is truly one of my greatest pleasures as a Member of Congress to be able to participate in the life of this community, and the wonderful and vital Greek-American friends that I have come to know are one of its greatest rewards.

I have also had the pleasure of establishing the Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues with the gentleman from Florida. This caucus allows Members of the House to join together to find ways to work toward better United States-Greek and Cypriot relations.

March 25, 1997, will mark the 176th anniversary of the day when Greece declared her independence, beginning an 8-year struggle for freedom.

From the fall of Constantinople in 1453, until the Declaration of Independence in 1821, almost 400 years, Greece remained under the heel of the Ottoman Empire. During that time, the people were deprived of all civil rights. Schools and churches.

One hundred seventy-six years ago, the Greek people were able to resume their rightful place as an ideal of democracy for the rest of the Western world.

The ancient Greek paradigm of democracy and individual liberties inspired our country to seek its own independence, and in that sense, as the American philosopher Will Durant observed, "Greece is the bright morning star of that Western civilization which is our nourishment and life."

Yet half a century later, the American Revolution became one of the ideals of the Greeks

as they fought for their own independence. Since their independence, Greece has become one of the most trusted partners allied with the United States in every major international conflict in this century.

In light of this special and longstanding relationship, some recent actions taken by the administration are particularly troubling. The proposed sale of Seahawk naval helicopters sends the wrong signal to Turkey, particularly given the tense situation on Cyprus.

The Hellenic Caucus responded by sending a letter condemning this sale to President Clinton that was signed by over 80 Members of Congress. I believe that it is time for the administration to reach the same conclusion and end unfortunate weapons sales until certain actions are halted. We need a rational policy that does not encourage aggressive actions and attitudes. There can be no middle or neutral position between those who uphold the rules of law and those who violate it.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to join in celebrating Greek independence and the indomitable, life-giving spirit of its people.

FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT TO BE CHANGED BY H.R. 1

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 1997, the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS] is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. OWENS. I want to alert everybody to the fact that we are going to be considering H.R. 1, the bill which deals with the denial of cash payments for overtime pay work to workers.

H.R. 1 is called, rightly by the Democrats, the Paycheck Reduction Act, or some of us call it the Employer Cash Enhancement Act.

I will have an amendment on the floor tomorrow in connection with H.R. 1. That amendment deals with two-thirds of the American work force, two-thirds of the people out there in the work force making \$10 an hour or less, and my amendment deals with trying to protect their interests.

I have been given the grand sum of 10 minutes to debate my amendment. That is 5 minutes for the opposition and 5 minutes for myself to debate an amendment which impacts on two-thirds of the work force.

We are going into the session tomorrow with the most important bill that we have considered thus far in this session. It is called H.R. 1 because the majority party, the majority Republicans, consider it to be so important as to give it that distinction of being H.R. 1.

It is first in priority, and it deals with changing the Fair Labor Standards Act, which has existed since Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. The Fair Labor Standards Act will now be changed to remove from it the mandate that when workers work more than 40 hours a week, they must be paid at a rate of time and a half. If an individual is making \$10 an hour and they work over 40 hours a week, every hour over 40 hours must be paid at the rate of \$15 an hour. It is that simple.

This bill did not fall from heaven. The act did not fall from heaven. It was

the result of exploitation of workers by employers in large numbers, exploitation in terms of low payment of wages in general and working workers around the clock, late hours each day, weekends, Sundays, Saturdays. There was great exploitation at the time this New Deal legislation came into being.

It did two things: It made the workers fortunate to have jobs get better treatment and better pay; and it also made employers employ more workers. If employers were going to have to pay time and a half rate to people who were employed, instead of driving the work force that they have incessantly, they are likely to want to hire people, more people, and pay them at the regular rate.

So it had both effects, that more people got jobs, and those who had the jobs had better working conditions.

Now we are about to make a drastic change. It is a revolutionary change in labor law. This is no small item. It is a revolutionary change in labor law. It is an extreme measure, an extreme step to take. It is an extreme step to take and it does not have to be that way. If we want flexibility in the law, and no law is written in stone, it does not have to be forever. Things change. Each generation has the right to look at the laws that it might be bound by and change those laws. There is nothing sacred about laws made by mankind.

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So we can change it. But why take a great step which just happens to be a step on the backs of the people at the bottom of the economic structure? The lowest income people will suffer the most. Why do that when you do not have to? You could take some steps toward changing the law, making the law more flexible, without hurting so many people.

The statistics show that two-thirds of the people who are working, fortunate enough to have a job, are earning less than \$10 an hour. I propose that if you have to go forward and change the labor law, the Fair Labor Standards Act, and it looks as if the votes are there, the majority Republicans have the vote in the House of Representatives. In the other body, in the Senate, they are steam rolling forward. They have the votes. So the likelihood is that this Republican-controlled Congress will come out with a bill that they both agree on, and it will have to be negotiated with the White House.

The White House is saying that they will not sign such a bill, they will veto the bill as it is. But when the White House says it will veto a bill as it is, that is a clear statement even to a sophomore in high school that what they are saying is we will negotiate.

What will the negotiations be? What I am saying is that it is likely that this revolutionary change in labor law which is rolling forward, it is likely that it is going to pass, it is likely that we are going to have some change in