

## SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

## GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

## GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New York?

There was no objection.

Mrs. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I rise with my colleague and dear friend, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS), with whom I founded and cochair the Hellenic Caucus to celebrate the 183rd anniversary of Greece's declaration of independence from the Ottoman Empire. March 25 has the same resonance in Greece that July 4 has in the United States.

Democracy traces its earliest roots back to ancient Greece, but it developed new strength in modern times from American colonists who demanded independence from Great Britain. When the Greeks of 1821 fought for independence from Turkey, they truly drew inspiration from the ideals and institutions of the fledgling United States. After 400 years of Ottoman rule, the Greeks began an 8-year battle that ended with the defeat of the Turkish Army.

Just as our defeat of the British Army was remarkable, so too was the Greeks' ability to defeat the Ottomans, a tremendous achievement. Against impossible odds, the Greeks broke free of one of the most powerful empires in history and gained their independence.

□ 1845

Mirroring our patriotic displays on July 4, Greeks celebrate this day with parades, speeches and parties. As many of my colleagues know, New York City is the home of the largest Hellenic population outside of Greece and Cyprus.

Western Queens, which I have the honor of representing, is often called Little Athens because of the large influence from Greece and Cyprus in that neighborhood. Recognizing the many similarities between our nations, it is a pleasure to take time to pay tribute to the Hellenic American community for their many contributions to America. We also honor the Federation of Hellenic Societies, which will lead the Greek Independence Day Parade in Manhattan.

As the Olympics return to Greece this summer, they have wisely chosen

the Olympic spirit as the theme of this year's parade. I am pleased to recognize this year's Grand Marshals, my friends Demetrios and Georgia Kaloidis and John and Margo Katsimatidis and Honorary Marshals Yiannis Skoularikis and George Papageorgopoulos. They will be accompanied by the Federation President, Apostolos Tomopoulos, and I will place in the RECORD the many names of the leaders of the Hellenic community who will be participating this weekend.

In the year 2004, a vibrant Greek democracy once again serves as an inspiration to its neighbors and the free world. As discussions progress toward an end to the 30-year division of Cyprus, we hope that the serious concerns of the Hellenic Cypriot American community will be reflected in the final agreement.

Forty-six members of the Hellenic Caucus joined in a letter to Secretary Colin Powell and Secretary General Kofi Annan to express their hope that any agreement will recognize, among other provisions, property rights, the demilitarization of Cyprus, the establishment of the legal obligations of the guarantor powers, and the presence of United Nations troops throughout the transition.

I also led a delegation of members of the Hellenic Caucus who met with Secretary General Kofi Annan last Friday to discuss the negotiations regarding the reunification of Cyprus before it enters the European Union on May 1. We expressed our support for the Secretary General in bringing the parties to the bargaining table, but expressed concerns regarding some of the issues that remain open: property rights, governance, free movement between Greek and Turkish areas of the island, and the pace of demilitarization of the island.

In particular, we raised questions about the ability of Cypriots to regain property that was seized or to receive fair compensation, how compensation would be funded, the unfairness of asking Greek Cypriots to foot the bill for buying back their own property, the ability of Greek Cypriots to have at least the same rights to acquire property in Turkish neighborhoods as foreigners do.

We stressed the importance of having a central government that has the ability to make decisions, and we expressed concern about limitations on the ability of Cypriots to travel unimpeded to all areas of the island.

While we applauded the plan to reduce the number of troops occupying the island, we expressed the hope that the U.N. troops would remain available to monitor the situation in Cyprus for as long as possible. We are hopeful that as the next round of negotiations take place, Secretary General Annan will do everything possible to ensure that our concerns will be addressed so that the final settlement will be acceptable to all Cypriots and Turks when it goes to the vote on the island.

I congratulate the Federation for honoring the Olympics in a year in which the games will be returning to their birthplace, Greece. The world has truly benefited from the ancient Hellenic tradition of allowing athletic competition to triumph over political differences.

I hope this Greek Independence Day will be a symbol of independence for all enslaved people, and we hope for the reunification of Cyprus and its entrance into the European Union. And, finally, *Zeto e eleftheria*.

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Greek Independence Day and to thank our colleagues, Mr. BILIRAKIS and Mrs. MALONEY, who have once again shown great leadership in their efforts to organize this special order for Greek Independence Day.

I would like to honor not only this important day in Greek history, but the strong and unique relationship that exists today between the United States and Greece. The evolution of modern democracy has its roots in ancient Athens, and as such, it is only fitting that we, as representatives of one of the world's great democracies, pay tribute to the Greeks and their historical contribution to democratic governance on this 183rd anniversary of their independence.

Since the people of Greece declared their independence on March 25, 1821, our two nations have enjoyed close relations, and generations of Greek immigrants have helped to strengthen and enrich the relations between our two countries. As the Congressional Representative for thousands of Greek Americans, I salute their motherland's eight-year struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire. Our countries' shared histories of fighting for our freedom and sovereignty creates a common bond between the United States and Greece.

Today, the United States' relationship with Greece continues to grow stronger. Greece has been a devoted supporter of the U.S. in every major international conflict of this century and plays an important role in both the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Greece has been one of our most loyal allies throughout our war against terrorism and has assisted the Coalition in both Iraq and Afghanistan by providing a military presence on land, sea and in the air. In turn, the United States has worked to attain a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Cyprus, the island nation that was brutally invaded by Turkey thirty years ago. I was saddened to see the UN-sponsored negotiations break down recently, so soon before Cyprus's impending accession to the EU on May 1st, but I will continue my efforts to see this important matter through to its successful resolution.

On this celebratory day of freedom and independence, I also want to heartily congratulate the Greek nation on the honor of hosting the Olympic Games in Athens this summer. I cannot think of a more meaningful place to celebrate the spirit of extraordinary achievement than in Athens, nearly 2,780 years after the first Olympics were held in ancient Greece. I look forward to sharing in the pride and celebration of the Olympic Games as they take place this summer and I look forward to continuing to work with leaders from the Greek community as we persist in our fight for a free and united Cyprus.

Ms. HARMAN. Mr. Speaker, as Greece celebrates its 183rd anniversary of freedom and the successful struggle for independence, I join my colleagues in congratulating the people of Greece and in extending heartfelt congratulations to those of Greek descent everywhere.

Greek Independence Day—like America's Fourth of July—is a celebration of a love of freedom and self-government. As the world's first democracy, ancient Greece was a model and a source of inspiration to our Founding Fathers.

In addition to shaping our early beginnings, modern Greece has been a strong friend and ally to the United States. Millions of Greeks have immigrated to the US and the contributions these families and individuals have made to our nation and communities have been immeasurable.

As a member of NATO, Greece has helped ensure the security of Europe's southern flank. But, in addition to a strong relationship that is steeped in common culture and philosophy, the US and Greece are also connected by recent history. On September 11, Greece lost twenty-one citizens at the World Trade Center. We share in their grief and note that, since then, Greece has stepped up its efforts to combat terrorism at home and abroad. And, on the eve of the Olympics, Greek officials are working hard to ensure the safety of the thousands of visitors who will be in Athens celebrating these historic and exciting games.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to join my colleagues who are also committed to strengthening US-Greek ties and to working on issues of mutual interest. There are many international as well as regional challenges we can only solve through cooperation and mutual respect.

Mr. DOYLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor Greece, one of America's greatest allies and sources of inspiration, on the 183rd anniversary of its independence from the Ottoman Empire.

Greek Independence Day marks the return of independence to the birthplace of democracy. The Ancient Greeks profoundly shaped western culture. Many of the fundamental elements of our modern culture can be traced back to them—logic, mathematics, the empirical method of scientific discovery, and of course many of the political and philosophical ideals embraced by our Founding Fathers, especially that of self-governance—originated with the ancient Greeks.

Today, Greece is one of our staunchest allies. It was one of the first countries to express solidarity with the United States after 9/11, and it has contributed significantly to the global war against terrorism through its military and humanitarian missions.

Greek-Americans in my district of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and throughout the United States can celebrate this day with pride as they continue their rich tradition of philanthropy, civic duty, and education. Indeed, Greek-Americans have contributed greatly to the American way of life. Their commitment to family, community, and this nation are an inspiration to us all.

I hope that my colleagues and the American people will join me today in honoring Greek Independence Day and the continued democratic friendship that exists between our nations.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, the 183rd anniversary of Greece's revolt against

the Ottoman Empire is an opportune time to congratulate the people of Greece for their ability to prevail against great odds in creating their modern, progressive state. Having just returned from Athens with my colleagues BEN CARDIN, and following the recent elections that resulted in a change in government, I think we should take this opportunity also to review the numerous challenges Greece faces if she is to meet her obligations as a participating State of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Since 1821, the people of Greece have overthrown the Ottoman Empire, survived a war with Turkey which created 1.3 million refugees, turned back an invasion by Italy and suffered through occupation by Nazi Germany. Since World War II they have lived through a full-fledged civil war against communism in which 100,000 Greeks were killed and 700,000 were internally displaced. And, from 1967 through 1974, they were under the control of a right-wing military junta. It is important to remember this tumultuous history of Greece when we acknowledge their success, and when we discuss outstanding issues.

Security for this summer's Athens Olympic Games is a matter of concern among Members of Congress due to our ongoing War against terrorism. The United States has helped Greece by providing funding and manpower to develop as fine a security system as possible, and I hope the American people will take advantage of the joint efforts between our government and the Government of Greece and enjoy the Games.

As Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, I am concerned also about the efforts Greece must make to fulfill her OSCE human rights obligations, particularly those involving trafficking in persons, freedom of religion and rights of the Greek Roma minority.

Through the assistance of Ambassador Thomas Miller, Rep. CARDIN and I met with officials of the Government of Greece and representatives of various NGOs to discuss Greece's progress in addressing and solving problems involving human trafficking. As the author of the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act, I am concerned that Greece has just barely moved from Tier Three to Tier Two. The police-based Committee on Trafficking, created in November 2001, clarified how their victims of trafficking screening process works and reported that in 2003, 49 criminal organizations had been broken up with 284 arrests, and 93 victims had been liberated with 28 characterized as victims. Others did not get victim status because they either opted to go home or were in Greece legally with passports. They described their two major anti-trafficking units, in Athens and Thessaloniki, and the training in anti-trafficking that is being taught at all levels of the police academies. The Committee has produced, in thirteen languages, "Know Your Rights," a pamphlet explaining to the trafficked steps toward safety. Victims are sent to NGO-supported shelters. After touring a shelter in Athens we were struck by the positive attitudes of the women, and came away with renewed hope for them. While these are all positive steps, the visit made clear that Greece needs to put more effort and funding into curbing human trafficking, especially in supporting the NGOs who are providing critical services in the field. I urge the new government of Prime Minister Karamanlis to focus on this issue.

We sought clarification of the problems non-Orthodox religious believers face in Greece and met with Muslim, Jewish, Protestant and Catholic religious leaders. The Thrace Muslim Association pointed out that although there are more than 11,000 Muslims in Athens, there is no mosque, and yet 22 unofficial houses of prayer with no imam. As there is no Muslim cemetery, Muslim dead must be transported over 800 kilometers to Thrace for proper burial. Ironically, there is a new mosque being constructed in Athens—it is nowhere near where the Muslims live, and it will be funded by Wahabi Saudis, a sect not particularly welcome by the local Moslem community nor by the Greek Government. We heard their complaints about limited military promotions, no work in the judiciary, limited job availability, and a poorly applied immigration law. Non-Orthodox Christian leaders spoke about discrimination as opposed to persecution, emphasizing the need to change society for their acceptance.

Greek Jews—the Jewish community that, at 80 percent, lost a larger portion than any other country under the Nazis—number around 10,000, concentrated in Athens and Thessaloniki. With 3 functioning synagogues, Rabbis must be brought in from other countries for the High Holidays. We were told "anti-Semitism is not widely and visibly expressed, but is expressed in many ways." The press is anti-Semitic under the guise of anti-Zionist or anti-Israeli statements, and is pro-Palestinian Liberation Army. School texts continue to have anti-Semitic materials and lack acknowledgement of the Holocaust, but have improved since the past. Vandalism of Jewish sites occurs, with little to no police follow-up.

Finally, we visited the relocated Roma camp in Spata, near the Athens airport, which is on an abandoned toxic NATO dump. They lack reliable running water or sewers, which is justified by the authorities since this is an illegal settlement on airport land, yet the 24 families, all with legal papers, live in portable homes supplied by the municipality and the children go to public school. They are never visited by local authorities, including doctors, despite promises. Their village is only accessible by terrible mud roads, which become a barrier in wet weather. It became clear that the two most important things needed for this community are permanent homes and a job for everyone that is seeking the opportunity.

These are snapshots of Greece, the invisible Greece that tourists and the outside world, even many Greeks, never see. Trafficked women who are forced to serve as sex slaves. Jews, Muslims and non-Orthodox Christians treated as second-class citizens. And Greek Roma whose basic needs are disregarded.

Yes, we should commemorate the 183rd anniversary of the fight for freedom, but still must wait for all Greeks to equally share that freedom.

The new government under Prime Minister Karamanlis has a great opportunity to step forth and work toward solutions in these matters. In my capacity as OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Special Representative on Human Trafficking Issues, and as Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, I look forward to working with the Prime Minister and with Greek parliamentarians to help find answers to these problems.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, on March 25, 1821, after nearly 400 years of Ottoman

rule, Greece became an independent state. But, even before there was a state, the influence of the Greek people was well established by their countless contributions to art, sport, culture, literature and government. No Congressional recognition of Greek Independence Day, can be made without an acknowledgment of the profound contribution the Greek people have made to the pursuit of democratic ideals here in the United States and the world over.

Every school-aged child is familiar with the story of how the Founding Fathers modeled the framework for American government on principles first laid down and discussed by the ancient Greeks thousands of years ago. Thomas Jefferson called ancient Greece, "the light which led ourselves out of Gothic darkness." Today, as we meed to celebrate Greek Independence Day, and celebrate the Greek-American heritage that continues to strengthen our communities and enrich our society, let us also recognize the influence the Greek people, past and present, have had on the strength of our democracy.

Greece and the United States are bound by history, mutual respect, and common ideals. In the coming year, the world will converge on Greece to participate in the Olympic Games, the largest pageant of athletic skill and competitive spirit on the planet. On Greek Independence Day, as we pause to reflect on the many ways Greece continues to touch our lives, I encourage all Americans to celebrate the contributions the people of Greece and Greek Americans have made to our country.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today, as a Member of the Hellenic Caucus, to celebrate the 183rd anniversary of Greek Independence Day. Today, the Olympic flame was lit in Olympia, Greece marking the day in the Julian calendar that the Modern Games began in Athens in 1896.

It is fitting that the Olympic torch returns to its homeland, as we mark the independence of a nation Thomas Jefferson called "the light which led ourselves out of Gothic darkness." Ancient Greece sparked many flames of political, social, and artistic innovation—the philosophy of Plato and Socrates, the plays of Sophocles and Aristophanes, and the epic poetry of Homer.

But Ancient Greece's greatest legacy is the establishment of democratic government and the Hellenic belief that the authority to govern derives directly from the people. After 400 years of rule by the Ottoman Empire, independence was especially meaningful to the people who burn with a deep rooted commitment to freedom. Greek ancestors passed on the traditions of liberty and freedom, of hard work and an appreciation of culture to their children and grandchildren, many of whom are proud Greek Americans and continue to provide important contributions to American life.

Today Greece is a true ally of the United States, a valued partner in NATO, and host to the world for the 2004 Olympics in Athens. My district celebrates the Greek heritage as an important part of community providing diversity and culture to our churches, schools, and neighborhoods.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Greece for its contributions past and present, as they continue to light flames of freedom.

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the 183d anniversary of Greek Independence Day. Nearly two centuries ago,

a small band of dedicated patriots rose up to end four centuries of oppression and foreign domination of their homeland. The great Greek thinker Herodotus once wrote "Great deeds are usually wrought at great risks." Today, Greeks worldwide join in celebration of this great deed and honor the bravery and self-sacrifice of this small band of heroes.

Twenty-five hundred years ago, the birth of democracy in Greece ushered in one of the golden ages of world history. The ancient Athenians created a civilization unparalleled in its original thinking and in its contributions to Western thought. They created a culture which not only valued human life and dignity, but saw the dawn of a new era in political and social thought and artistic and scientific innovation.

Thomas Jefferson called ancient Greece "the light which led ourselves out of Gothic darkness." In fact, our founding fathers drew heavily on the political experience and thinking of the ancient Greeks. Many of these great philosophers are honored in the House chamber, their faces adorning the walls above the visitors gallery. If ancient Greece's greatest accomplishment is the establishment of democratic government, then its greatest legacy is the enshrining of these principles in American law and the founding of our Constitution.

Barely a generation after our own struggle for independence, Greek patriots turned to the American Revolution for inspiration in their struggle for liberty. They saw in the success of our Republic the hope for their own future. Many Americans fought alongside the Greeks, and this Congress sent supplies to aid the patriots in their quest for freedom.

My grandmother comes from the Greek town of Soliniki. Although her family was forced to flee, they maintained their Greek roots. I was raised in a household that celebrated both our Judaism and our Hellenic background. Last year, I was fortunate enough to return to my family's ancestral home and bring back a small jar of soil. It brightened my mother's final days to finally see and touch the soil of her ancestors.

Last year, when I visited Greece, I was impressed by the graciousness and hospitality of the Greek people, which made me even more proud of my Greek ancestry. America has cultural roots in the classical history of Greece, and I believe our shared heritage can draw us closer together on bridging the boundaries between East and West.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, it is a great honor for me to pay tribute on Greek Independence Day to one of the United States' most important allies—and one that is held in such deep affection by millions and millions of Americans.

Western civilization as we know it today owes a profound debt and, indeed, its very origins, to Greece. Classical Greek philosophy, sculpture, and theater set standards to which today's practitioners still aspire. And, as the cradle of democracy, Athens is the spiritual ancestor of our own Republic. The very word democracy comes from Greek, and so when we speak of the principles most dear to us, we are, in effect, speaking Greek.

The history of Greek independence is one of the inspiring stories of our time. It is the tale of the revival of a great and ancient people through sheer commitment, sacrifice, and love of freedom and heritage. Transmitted through the generations, the ideals of the ancient

Greeks inspired their revolutionary descendants in the 19th century, when gallant stalwarts of the War of Independence such as Theodore Kolokotronis and Rigas Velestinlis wrote of their belief in the rights of man.

The histories and fortunes of the United States and Greece have been intimately intertwined ever since the beginning of modern Greek sovereignty. The cause of Greek independence evoked sympathy throughout the Western world. Well known is Lord Byron, whose uncompromising commitment to Greece was epitomized by his declaration "In for a penny, in for a pound." Less renowned but no less committed were the many American Philhellenes, who repaid their debt to Greek culture by crossing the ocean to fight for Greek liberation. I am pleased that these American citizens were honored with a monument in Athens 4 years ago.

Greek citizens also crossed the ocean in the other direction, emigrating to the United States, where they enjoyed great success and shared their prosperity with their kinfolk in their original homeland. They have served as a bridge of understanding between our two nations, and they have refreshed America with their spirit, their patriotism, and their hard work. Today, some 5 million Americans claim Greek ancestry, with understandable pride.

Greece is one of less than a handful of nations which have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States in every major war of the 20th century. Our close relations became even closer after World War II. The Truman Doctrine helped save Greece from communism, indeed helped save it for the Western world, and the Marshall Plan helped in its economic regeneration. In 1952, Greece joined NATO, formalizing the deep, mutual commitment of Greece and the rest of the Western world to protecting freedom.

In more recent times, Greece has been one of the world's amazing success stories. A full-fledged member of the European Union for two decades, Greece has become increasingly prosperous; it has whipped chronic inflation and qualified to join the "Euro currency zone." This year we celebrate the passage of three decades since modern Greece reclaimed its mantle as a democratic role model for the nations of the world. Its once unsettled domestic politics has long since given way to an uncontestedly stable, yet colorful, democracy. Just this month, we once again witnessed the peaceful electoral transfer of power from one democratic party to another.

This year we have more reason than ever to celebrate the legacy of Greece, as the Olympics return to their birthplace and real home. Just as Greeks gave the world democracy, so they taught us the Olympic ideals of peace, cooperation, and fair and noble competition. And so it is appropriate that Athens, the city that first lit the torch of Democracy, now plays host to the Olympic flame.

Greece remains our critical strategic partner in today's post-cold-war world. We cooperate closely in promoting peace and stability in the Balkans. Economic ties with Greece are vital to virtually every Balkan state. Athens has been a firm supporter of efforts to settle the Cyprus problem, and it remains committed to a just, lasting, and democratic settlement of the Cyprus issue. And I'm sure everyone in this body applauds Greece's historic and courageous efforts in recent years to resolve differences with its neighbor Turkey.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Greek people on the 183d anniversary of their independence, and I join my colleagues in thanking them for their vast contributions to world civilization and especially to our Nation.

#### GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, first I would say that I am very pleased to be doing this special order in conjunction with the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), who has been very stellar, a great friend of both republics, Greece and Cyprus, all through the years. And today I too proudly rise to celebrate Greek Independence Day and the strong ties that bind the nation of Greece and the United States.

One hundred and eighty-three years ago, the people of Greece began a journey that would mark a symbolic rebirth of democracy in the land, in the land where those principles of human dignity were first espoused.

They rebelled against more than 400 years of Turkish oppression. The revolution of 1821 brought independence to Greece and emboldened those who still sought freedom across the world.

I commemorate Greek Independence Day each year for the same reasons that we celebrate our July 4. It proved that a united people through sheer will and perseverance, can prevail against tyranny.

Men such as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, and Euripides developed a then-unique notion that men could, if left to their own devices, lead themselves rather than be subject to the will of a sovereign. It was Aristotle who said, "We make war that we may live in peace." On March 25, 1821, Archbishop Germanos of Patras embodied the spirit of those words when he raised the flag of freedom and was the first to declare Greece free.

Revolutions embody a sense of heroism, bringing forth the greatness of the American spirit. As Thomas Jefferson once said, "To the ancient Greeks we are all indebted for the light which led ourselves," American colonists, "out of gothic darkness." Quoting Jefferson on the anniversary of Greek Independence is particularly appropriate. Jefferson and the rest of the Founding Fathers looked back to the teachings of ancient Greek philosophers for inspiration as they sought to craft a strong democratic state. In 1821, the Greeks looked to our Founding Fathers for inspiration when they began their journey toward freedom.

Although many lives were sacrificed at the altar of freedom, the Greek people rallied around the battle cry, "Eleftheria I Thanatos," "liberty or death," mirroring of course the words of American Patriot Patrick Henry who said "Give me liberty or give me

death." These words personified the Greek patriots' unmitigated desire to be free.

We all know that the price of liberty can be very high. History is replete with the names of the millions who have sacrificed for it. Many great scholars throughout history warned that we maintain democracy only at great cost. The freedom we enjoy today is due to a large degree to the sacrifices made by men and women in the past, in Greece, in America, and all over the world.

Freedom is America's heart. It is central to our being, and from the beginning we have recognized that freedom is not just an American right, it is a God-given right to every citizen of the world.

We must never forget that freedom must be constantly guarded. It is a noble but fragile thing that can be stolen or snuffed out if not protected. We cannot take for granted that we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights. We enjoy our freedom only because we have been willing to fight and die for it just like our forefathers and the valiant Greeks in 1821.

Mr. Speaker, on this 183rd birthday of Greek Independence, when we celebrate the restoration of democracy to its conception, we also celebrate the triumph of the human spirit and the strength of man's will. The goals and values that the people of Greece share with the people of the United States reaffirm our common democratic heritage. This occasion also serves to remind us that we must never take for granted the right to determine our own fate.

Madam Speaker, today I proudly rise to celebrate Greek Independence Day and the strong ties that bind the nation of Greece and the United States.

One hundred and eighty-three years ago, the people of Greece began a journey that would mark the symbolic rebirth of democracy in the land where those principles of human dignity were first espoused.

They rebelled against more than 400 years of Turkish oppression. The revolution of 1821 brought independence to Greece and emboldened those who still sought freedom across the world. I commemorate Greek Independence Day each year for the same reasons we celebrate our Fourth of July. It proved that a united people, through sheer will and perseverance, can prevail against tyranny. The lessons the Greeks and our colonial forefathers taught us provide hope and inspiration to victims of persecution throughout the world today.

Men such as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, and Euripides developed the then-unique notion that men could, if left to their own devices, lead themselves rather than be subject to the will of a sovereign. It was Aristotle who said: "We make war that we may live in peace." On March 25, 1821, Archbishop Germanos of Patras embodied the spirit of those words when he raised the flag of freedom and was the first to declare Greece free.

Revolutions embody a sense of heroism, bringing forth the greatness of the human spirit. It was Thomas Jefferson who said that,

"One man with courage is a majority." Quoting Jefferson on the anniversary of Greek independence is particularly appropriate. Jefferson, and the rest of the Founding Fathers, looked back to the teachings of ancient Greek philosophers for inspiration as they sought to craft a strong democratic state. And in 1821, the Greeks looked to our Founding Fathers for inspiration when they began their journey toward freedom.

The history of Greek independence, like that of the American Revolution, is filled with many stories of courage and heroism. There are many parallels between the American and Greek Revolutions.

Encouraged by the American Revolution, the Greeks began their rebellion after four centuries of Turkish oppression, facing what appeared to be insurmountable odds. Both nations faced the prospect of having to defeat an empire to obtain liberty. And if Samuel Adams, the American revolutionary leader who lit the first spark of rebellion by leading the Boston Tea Party, had a Greek counterpart, that man would be Alexander Ypsilantis.

Ypsilantis was born in Istanbul, and his family was later exiled to Russia. Ypsilantis served in the Russian army, and it was there, during his military service, that he became involved with a secret society called the "Philiike Hetairia," which translated means "friendly society." The "friendly society" was made up of merchants and other Greek leaders, but the intent of the society was to seek freedom for Greece and her people.

The group planned a secret uprising for 1821 to be led by Ypsilantis. He and 4,500 volunteers assembled near the Russian border to launch an insurrection against the Turks. The Turkish army massacred the ill-prepared Greek volunteers, and Ypsilantis was caught and placed in prison, where he subsequently died. However, the first bells of liberty had been rung, and Greek independence would not be stopped.

When news of Greek uprisings spread, the Turks killed Greek clergymen, clerics, and laity in a frightening display of force. In a vicious act of vengeance, the Turks invaded the island of Chios and slaughtered 25,000 of the local residents. The invaders enslaved half the island's population of 100,000.

Although many lives were sacrificed at the altar of freedom, the Greek people rallied around the battle cry "Eleftheria I Thanatos" "liberty or death," mirroring the words of American Patriot Patrick Henry who said: "Give me liberty or give me death." These words personified the Greek patriots' unmitigated desire to be free.

Another heroic Greek whom many believe was the most important figure in the revolution was Theodoros Kolokotronis. He was the leader of the Klephts, a group of rebellious and resilient Greeks who refused to submit to Turkish subjugation. Kolokotronis used military strategy he learned while in the service of the English Army to organize a force of over 7,000 men. The Klephts swooped down on the Turks from their mountain strongholds, battering their oppressors into submission.

One battle in particular, where Kolokotronis led his vastly outnumbered forces against the Turks, stands out. The Turks had invaded the Peloponnese with 30,000 men. Kolokotronis led his force, which was outnumbered by a ratio of 4 to 1, against the Turkish army. A fierce battle ensued and many lives were lost,