

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BILIRAKIS. 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 this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, 184 years ago, the people of Greece began a journey that would mark a symbolic rebirth of democracy in the land where those principles to 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 4th of July. It proved that a united people, through sheer will and perseverance, can prevail against tyranny. Both our nations share an illustrious history and defense of this cherished ideal.

The concept of democracy was first conceived by the ancient Athenians more than 2,500 years ago. 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 Thomas Jefferson who said, "One man with courage is a majority." Jefferson and the rest of the Founding Fathers looked back to the teachings of ancient Greek philosophers for inspiration as they sought to craft the Declaration of Independence. 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.

News of the Greek revolution was met with widespread feelings of compassion in the United States. Several American Presidents, including James Monroe and John Quincy Adams, conveyed their support for the revolution through their annual messages to Congress.

Various Members of Congress also showed a keen interest in the Greeks' struggle for autonomy. Henry Clay, who in 1825 became Secretary of State, was a champion of Greece's fight for independence.

After 7 years of fighting, the Greeks finally got their independence. Unfortunately, many people were killed in

the struggle for freedom. 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.

This year's celebration of Greek Independence Day is especially fitting in light of the current wave of political and social movements around the world in the name of democracy. International events in recent months have brought stunning news of political upheaval and dramatic changes from the Middle East, Africa, and Eastern Europe. Most notably, through peaceful demonstrations, Syria lost its political stronghold on Lebanon. Ukraine elected Viktor Yushchenko as its new President, and Iraq held its first democratic elections. The common theme among all of these movements has been democracy.

However, at a time of democratic celebration, the divided Republic of Cyprus remains a sore spot. Sadly, Turkey still illegally occupies Cyprus, as it has since its invasion in 1974. Despite sincere efforts by the United Nations and the United States, a fair plan was not presented to the people of Cyprus on April 24, 2004. Many people, including the Greek-Cypriots themselves, regret that the plan presented to them did not allow both communities to respond positively. It is one thing for others to comment on the terms and conditions for settlement; but it is the Cypriots, the Cypriots who must live with whatever plan that would be adopted. Finding a fair resolution for Cyprus will help stabilize a region marked more often by conflict than accord. I urge our government to remain committed to finding a peaceful settlement for Cyprus.

Although the ties between Greece and America go back hundreds of years, the fruit of this bond is visible today. During the early 1900s, one out of four Greek males immigrated to the United States. Today there are close to 3 million Greek Americans. I am especially proud of my fellow Greek Americans who have made contributions to our society in the fields of medicine, science, business, law, and politics, among other areas. In the words of a notable British poet, Percy Shelley, he said, "We are all Greeks! Our laws, our literature, our religion, our art have their roots in Greece."

Mr. Speaker, on this 184th birthday of Greek independence, we celebrate the triumph of the human spirit and the strength of man's will. Today we commemorate the reaffirmation of the democratic heritage that our two nations share so closely. Lastly, this occasion also serves to remind us, Mr. Speaker, that we must never take for granted the right to determine our own fate.

Mr. 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-four years ago, the people of Greece began a journey that would

mark the symbolic rebirth of democracy in the land where those principles to 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 provided that a united people, through sheer will and perseverance, can prevail against tyranny. Both our nations share an illustrious history in defense of this cherished ideal.

The concept of democracy was first conceived by the ancient Athenians more than 2,500 years ago. 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: "If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost." It was this concept that our Founding Fathers drew heavily upon in forming our representative government.

It was Thomas Jefferson who said that, "One man with courage is a majority." Jefferson, and the rest of the Founding Fathers, looked back to the teachings of ancient Greek philosophers for inspiration as they sought to craft the Declaration of Independence. 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. 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. 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.

Not surprisingly, the Greek Commander-in-Chief Petros Mavromichalis appealed to the citizens of America, "Having formed the resolution to live or die, we are drawn toward you by a just sympathy since it is in your land that liberty has fixed her abode. . . . Hence, honoring her name, we invoke yours at the same time, trusting that in imitating you, we shall imitate our ancestors and be thought worthy of them if we succeed in resembling you."

News of the Greek revolution was met with widespread feelings of compassion in the United States. Several American Presidents, including James Monroe and John Quincy Adams, conveyed their support for the revolution through their annual messages to Congress. William Harrison, our ninth president, expressed his belief in freedom for Greece, saying: "We must send our free will offering. 'The Star-spangled Banner' must wave in the Aegean . . . a messenger of fraternity and friendship to Greece."

Various Members of Congress also showed a keen interest in the Greeks' struggle for autonomy. Henry Clay, who in 1825 became

Secretary of State, was a champion of Greece's fight for independence. Among the most vocal was Daniel Webster from Massachusetts, who frequently roused the sympathetic interest of his colleagues and other Americans in the Greek revolution.

Many Americans sympathized with the "Philhellenic" cause and sent the Greeks supplies, food, and medicine; anything that could help maintain and boost the moral of the Greeks. In fact, many traveled to Greece to join the revolution in the fight for freedom.

After seven years of fighting, the Greeks finally got their independence. Unfortunately, many people were killed in the struggle for freedom. 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 a 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. The lessons the Greeks and our colonial forefathers taught us provide hope and inspiration to victims of persecution throughout the world today.

This year's celebration of Greek Independence Day is especially fitting in light of the current wave of political and social movements around the world in the name of democracy. International events in recent months have brought stunning news of political upheaval and dramatic changes from the Middle East, Africa and Eastern Europe. Most notably, through peaceful demonstrations, Syria lost its political stronghold on Lebanon, Ukraine elected Viktor Yushchenko as its new president and Iraq held its first democratic elections. The common theme between all of these movements has been democracy.

However, at a time of democratic celebration, the divided Republic of Cyprus remains a sore spot. Sadly, Turkey still illegally occupies Cyprus, as it has since its invasion in 1974. Despite sincere efforts by the United Nations and the United States, a fair plan was not presented to the people of Cyprus on April 24, 2004. Many people—including the Greek-Cypriots themselves—regret that the plan presented to them did not allow both communities to respond positively. It is one thing for others to comment on the terms and conditions for settlement, but it is the Cypriots who must live with whatever plan would be adopted. Finding a fair resolution for Cyprus will help stabilize a region marked more often by conflict than accord. I urge our government to remain committed to finding a peaceful settlement for Cyprus.

I believe these principles of which my colleagues and I have spoken about today are not uniquely Greek or American. They are our promise to the world and they form a legacy that we all cherish and have responsibility to protect and defend.

The priceless ideas of democracy and equality born in ancient Greece have strongly shaped the American national identity. We continue to give hope and inspiration to millions around the world who yearn to live in a free society like ours. 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. Greece set the example for us and we have set the example for countless others.

Although the ties between Greece and America go back hundreds of years, the fruit of this bond is visible today. During the early 1900s one out of four Greek males immigrated to the United States. Today there are close to three million Greek-Americans. I am especially proud of my fellow Greek-Americans who have made contributions to our society in the fields of medicine, science, business, law and politics, among other areas. In the words of a notable British poet, Percy Shelley, "We are all Greeks! Our laws, our literature, our religion, our art, have their roots in Greece."

Mr. Speaker, on this 184th birthday of Greek Independence we celebrate the triumph of the human spirit and the strength of man's will. Today we commemorate the reaffirmation of the democratic heritage that our two nations share so closely. Lastly, this occasion also serves to remind us that we must never take for granted the right to determine our own fate.

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 which is regarded with such deep affection by millions of Americans of all ethnic origins.

Western civilization as we know it today owes the deepest debt and, indeed, its very origins, to the Greek nation. 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 and, in many respects, its role model.

Mr. Speaker, the history of Greek independence is one of the inspiring stories of our time. It is the tale of the revival of an ancient and great 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 nineteenth century, and great and 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 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 have been honored with a monument in Athens.

Mr. Speaker, 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 five million Americans claim Greek ancestry, with understandable pride.

Our close relations with Greece became even closer after World War II. The Truman Doctrine helped save Greece from communism, indeed helped save it for the Western and democratic world, and the Marshall Plan helped in Greece's 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, Mr. Speaker, Greece has been one of the world's amazing success stories. A full-fledged member of the European Union for nearly a quarter-century, Greece has become increasingly prosperous; it whipped chronic inflation and joined the "Euro currency zone." Its once unsettled domestic politics—including the sad chapter of military rule from 1967–74—has long since given way to an uncontestedly stable, yet still colorful, democracy. The Greek people cherish democracy not only as their contribution to world civilization but as a system which they achieved only through enormous sacrifice and commitment in modern times.

Greece remains one of our critical strategic partners 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 a just, lasting, and democratic settlement of the Cyprus issue. More than 1,300 Greek troops took part in Operation Enduring Freedom and helped liberate Afghanistan from Taliban tyranny. And I'm sure everybody in this body applauds Greece's historic and courageous effort to resolve differences with its neighbor Turkey, punctuated by its strong backing last year for Turkey's successful bid to open accession talks for EU membership.

Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Greek people on the 184th anniversary of their independence and in thanking them for their substantial contributions to world civilization and especially to our nation.

Mr. DOYLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise here today to honor a great American ally and an inspiration to people striving for freedom throughout the whole world—Greece.

Today the House observes the 184th anniversary of Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire. This anniversary not only represents a triumph for the nation of Greece but a triumph for all Western democratic nations. The ancient city-states of Greece created many of the fundamental elements that have shaped our modern culture such as logic, mathematics, the empirical method of scientific discovery, politics, and the philosophical ideals that were embraced by our Founding Fathers, especially the motion of democracy and self-governance.

In a perplexing world where terrorism and war confront our nation, it is comforting to know that we can count on the nation of Greece for support. Greece remains one of our staunchest allies. Greece was one of the first nations to express solidarity for the United States after 9/11 and since then has been in the forefront of the War on Terror.

I join Greek Americans in my district of Pittsburgh Pennsylvania and throughout the world in celebrating a proud nation with a rich long heritage in inspiring and influencing men and women around the world. I am proud to stand here today to recognize and honor

Greece on this the 184th Anniversary of its independence.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join millions of Greeks and Greek-Americans in celebration of the 184th anniversary of Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire.

Through it was 184 years ago this day that the Greek people fought for their unquestioned freedom, the Greek tradition of liberty and self-governance extends back thousands of years. The city-states of that storied peninsula were truly the forefathers of our democratic lineage. Our own founders drew upon the teachings and experiences of the ancient Greeks in their pursuit of individual freedom.

There is no area of human thought that does not pay homage to the enduring contributions of Greece. Our greatest masters of mathematics, literature, science, art, architecture, theatre and philosophy all trace their intellectual heritage through its people. It is without question that the ancient Greeks were responsible for bringing light on what was an otherwise dark world.

In two centuries, we have watched as a new democracy has been reformed where the very idea of democracy was born. The Greek people have also helped build America as well. Greek-American communities continue to add to the richness and tradition of many of America's cities, not least of all, in my own district in New York City. Our shared values of freedom and individual excellence have made Greek-Americans an important part of the quilt of American society.

Mr. Speaker, on this occasion in which we celebrate Greeks independence, let us all remember the great debt we owe to the civilization that has given so much of itself to become the foundation of all democracies. By carrying on the great tradition of democracy, let us remember and honor the legacy of ancient Greece, as we stand with our Greek friends and allies of today.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate Greeks Independence Day.

March 25, 2005 marked the 184th anniversary of the revolution that freed the people of Greece from the Ottoman Empire. Today, I extend my solidarity in commemoration of this celebration of independence and democracy.

As the cradle of western civilization, we are deeply indebted to the nation of Greece and the Greek people for their wisdom and commitment to the ideals of freedom and democracy. Our own democracy was created from the blue prints of ancient Greece.

The contribution of Greeks to the arts, sciences, and political fields are felt profoundly to this day. It is through Greek experiences and insight that the ideals of self-governance were shaped. In modern times, the Greek people have reaffirmed their commitment to the goals of their proud past. As a member of the European Union, Greece has constantly championed democratic principles and been an important advocate for freedom fighters throughout the world.

I congratulate the people of Greece for their vital contributions to our world, in both ancient and modern times, as we celebrate Greek Independence Day.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, March 25, 2005 has been designated "Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American

Democracy." I am pleased to join my colleagues in recognizing the unique contribution of Greece and of Greek-Americans.

Ancient Greeks created a form of government that got people involved in the task of governing themselves. Our founding fathers, as ratified in our Constitution, enshrined this principle in American law and created a system of "Grecian republics" which was based on the Hellenic belief that the authority to govern derives directly from the people. We will always owe a great intellectual debt to that rich and vibrant civilization. Today, our two countries share a great cultural affinity, are partners in the NATO alliance, and have many other ties that bind us together.

In Dallas, Texas, the warm winds of the Greek Isles are just a step away in Yiayia Sofia's Greek Village, the permanent exhibit at the Dallas Children's Museum which offers children the rare opportunity to explore a replica of a home and village square in Greece. Mr. Speaker, more than a million citizens of Greek descent live in America today, and their devotion to family, faith, community, and country has enriched me, my community in Dallas, Texas, as well as our Nation. For that I am always appreciative of the Greek beauty and culture that has enriched my entire life. I'm pleased we take time out each year to recall how we are all enriched by the art, the ideals, and the spirit of Greece.

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in celebration of the 184th Anniversary of Greek Independence and to thank my colleagues, Mr. BILIRAKIS and Mrs. MALONEY, who have once again shown great leadership in their efforts to organize this special order.

On Greek Independence Day, we celebrate our special ties of friendship, history, and shared values with Greece. In doing so, we not only honor such an important day in Greek history, but also the strong and unique relationship that exists today between the United States and Greece.

Our two nations have enjoyed close relations since the people of Greece declared their independence on March 25, 1821. Our country has welcomed generations of Greek immigrants, and we are grateful for how they have enhanced our culture and contributed to our country in a variety of fields, including philosophy, architecture, politics and the arts. I am so proud to have a thriving community of Hellenic-Americans in the 9th District of New Jersey. I salute them and their ancestors' struggle for freedom on the anniversary of Greek Independence Day and I commend them for their tremendous contributions to the very fabric of our community.

For nearly 200 years, the American and Greek peoples have shared a profound commitment to democratic principles, and have worked to create societies built on these principles. The United States and Greece have stood together in every major struggle for freedom and democracy and now they continue to work together in the fight against terrorism. Greece continues to be a valuable military partner to the United States, as is evident through their support of both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, and an important member of both NATO and the European Union.

I am so pleased to have this opportunity to toast the Greek people and celebrate Greek culture once again. It is an honor to rise and commemorate the 184th Greek Independence

Day. On this day we celebrate more than just Greece's independence, we celebrate Greece as an important military ally and longstanding friend of the United States.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in proud recognition of the 184th anniversary of Greek Independence. On this special day for Greece, we commemorate the strength and determination of its people to restore their democratic roots and identity.

The political philosophies of both the United States and Greece have been challenged by oppressive powers, and both nations have proudly defended their right to self-government and individual freedoms. Greece endured eleven long years of war to succeed in gaining independence from the Ottoman Empire. American and Hellenic cultures greatly respect this tradition of independence and recognize the importance of democratic principles.

The United States and Greece have always enjoyed a friendship and alliance in international and cultural endeavors. Hellenic principles resonate in our culture and politics, since the United States was founded on the principles of democracy developed thousands of years ago in the city-states of ancient Greece. The beauty of Greek architecture can even be found while taking a walk through our beloved Capitol building. Likewise, our country's influence on Greece can be seen in their first Constitution, which was based on our Declaration of Independence and the principles behind the American Revolution.

On a cultural level, I would like to commend Greece on the great success of the Olympic Games in Athens last August. Since Greece resurrected the Olympics in 1896, they have symbolized peace and excellence for people around the world. The Olympics show that great athletic skill and spirited competition can bring nations together despite their differences. Greece served as a gracious host of the Games, and the 25th Summer Olympics proved again to the world how Hellenic ideals such as equality and friendship have stood the test of time and continue to flourish at a global level. Hellenic culture, whether through its development of democratic government or its espousal of friendly competition, encourages people to come together amicably even during the most difficult of times.

Mr. Speaker, it would be hard to imagine the United States of America, or the world for that matter, without the great contributions of Greece. I will continue to work in Congress to support Hellenic causes, and I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating Greece on the anniversary of its independence.

I urge my colleagues to join me in celebrating this anniversary.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to join my colleagues here in the United States Congress in celebration of the 184th anniversary of Greece's Independence Day. We would not be standing in this very building were it not for the influences of ancient Greek architecture and ancient Greek notions of freedom, democracy, and independence.

On the anniversary of Greek independence, we honor the achievements and contributions of the Greek people and the Greek state, and salute a proud nation that has accomplished so much in history, science, philosophy, mathematics, literature, and art. But by far the most notable of all their achievements is the notion of democracy. Our own founding fathers incorporated the ancient Greek's political experience and philosophy when they formed our

representative democracy. In 1821, the Greeks continued this tradition by revolting against nearly 400 years of repressive rule by the Ottoman Empire and began their journey toward independence.

Greek concepts of government and freedom have had an immense and inestimable influence on the world. The world witnessed this as Greece, home of the first Olympics, hosted the Games once again in 2004. So March 25th marked a historic day for the world, not just for Greece alone. It is yet another day for all to celebrate the principles of democracy, freedom and self-governance.

Over the years, the United States and Greece have shown their commitment to and admiration for democratic ideals. Greece is one of only a handful of countries that stood by the United States in every major international conflict in the 20th century: World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Desert Storm, and the Balkans. The Greek government responded to the September 11th terrorist attacks with strong political support, as well. The United States and Greece have formed a special bond based upon their shared commitment to democracy and freedom.

Today, the world needs to come together and stand on the basis of Greek principles to protect the human and religious rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. While this is an issue that concerns the Greek community, it is one that is vital to all communities. We must protect the rights of Ecumenical Patriarchate as Turkey has: refused to recognize the Ecumenical Patriarchate's international status and its significance of Orthodox Christians around the world; prevented the Orthodox Christian church from selecting bishops from anywhere in the world to become the Ecumenical Patriarch by requiring Turkish citizenship; confiscated Ecumenical properties since 2002; and levied a retroactive tax on the Balukli Hospital, a philanthropic institution run by the Ecumenical Patriarchate which treats thousands of patients a year.

We also call on Turkey to grant appropriate international recognition and ecclesiastic succession to the Ecumenical Patriarch, along with the right to train clergy of all nationalities.

Finally, the resolution calls on Turkey to respect the property rights and religious rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

From the history of democracy to the religious freedom and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, we share a common vision with Greece and all of her people. On this day, the United States of America and Greece stand side-by-side in our commitment to the principles of democracy, freedom, and independence. And I would like to thank the Greek people for leading the way and giving us the inspiration and strength to pursue these ideals.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, on March 25th Greece celebrated its 184th year of independence. I am here tonight to praise a society that represents, in a historical sense, the origins of what we call Western culture, and, in a contemporary sense, one of the staunchest defenders of Western society and values. There are many of us in Congress, on both sides of the spectrum, who are staunchly committed to preserving and strengthening the ties between Greek and American people.

In the years since Greek independence, Americans and Greeks have grown ever clos-

er, bound by ties of strategic and military alliance, common values of democracy, individual freedom, human rights, and close personal friendship.

The timeless values of Greek culture have endured for centuries, indeed for millennia. Four hundred years of control by the Ottoman Empire could not overcome the Greek people's determination to be free. But, I regret to say, Mr. Speaker, to this day, the Greek people must battle against oppression. For over 30 years now, Greece has stood firm in its determination to bring freedom and independence to the illegally occupied nation of Cyprus.

I also have grown increasingly concerned over the Bush administration's blatant shift in policy towards Cyprus that's become apparent since the Greek Cypriots rejected a United Nations reunification proposal offered by U.N. Secretary General Koffi Annan last year. I reject the belief that the United States Government should punish Greek Cypriots for going to the voting booth and concluding, rightly in my opinion, that the Annan Plan forced the Greek Cypriots to make far more concessions than Turkey.

I'm particularly concerned by comments made earlier this year by Secretary Rice in Turkey in which she stated: (and I quote) "We are looking at what we can do to ease the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots because, we, like everyone else, were disappointed that the Annan plan was not adopted. We have taken some steps, direct aid for instance to Turkish Cypriots, but there are probably other things that we should look at doing."

I shouldn't have to remind the Secretary of State that the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots derives from the ongoing occupation of the northern third of the island by Turkish troops and that our nations efforts should be concentrated on the withdrawal of these troops.

While the U.S. government should work to make the lives of Turkish-Cypriots better, it's simply unacceptable for our government to help the Turkish-Cypriot 'government' that continues to illegally rule the northern third of the island. The Bush administration simply cannot ignore well-established international law as a way to punish the Greek Cypriots for their democratic vote in opposition to the Annan Plan.

It's important that Secretary of State take a historic look at the Cyprus problem over the last 30 years when developing U.S. policy. It's important the U.S. Government not only look at the Cyprus problem through the lens of the Annan vote last year, but also from the perspective of three decades of illegal actions on the Turkish side.

I would hope that the Bush administration would then conclude that it's in the best interests of our nation to support a united democratic Cyprus, free of any Turkish occupation or any Turkish troops.

Mr. Speaker, I want to once again congratulate the Greek people for 184 years of independence, and hope someday soon we can celebrate the independence of the Greek-Cypriots.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

THE MORE WE KNOW ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S PLAN, THE LESS WE LIKE IT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GENE GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, during the Easter recess, our office sponsored a town hall meeting for constituents to voice their opinions on the administration's plan to partially privatize Social Security. It was actually held at a community college, at Houston Community College North-east, that is in our district; and we had both college students and senior citizens there.

One of the things that came out of that town hall meeting is the concern that Social Security is not broke; that sure, \$1.7 trillion of our national debt is, as the President says, IOUs from Social Security, and my constituents' concern is that if we are going to pay back the 40 percent of our national debt, about \$7 trillion, to the many citizens of foreign countries who loan money to the United States, why on this Earth would we not pay back the Social Security trust fund that \$1.7 trillion.

One thing that came out of that town hall meeting is that the more details they learned about the President's plan, the less they favor it. That might be why the administration has released so few details about their plan. What we know is the plan includes a proposal to allow taxpayers 4 percent or up to \$1,000 in private savings accounts that theoretically would yield a greater return than the government bonds on which Social Security is now invested. That proposal sounds all well and good until the American people, in our district particularly, realized that the private accounts would not alleviate any of Social Security's financial challenges.

The recent Social Security Trustees Report estimated the Social Security shortfall to be \$3.7 trillion over the next 75 years. But the proposal to create these private accounts or personal accounts will not help the bottom line at all. Even the President, before we broke for our Easter recess, admitted that "personal accounts do not solve the issue."

What the President needed to add at the end of that sentence is that the private accounts actually make the problem worse.

In the first 20 years of the President's plan, the Federal Government will have to borrow \$5 trillion to make up for the additional shortfall created by these private or special accounts. And, even worse, if you use the Social Security Administration's assumption, the administration's privatization plan would exhaust the trust fund actually 11 years earlier than currently projected.