



STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ROBERT MENENDEZ

March 25, 2021

“On the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Greece’s Independence”

M. President, I come to the floor in honor of an historic occasion: the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Greece’s independence. I am delighted to join the Greek-American community in New Jersey and across the United States in celebrating this bicentennial. The bonds of friendship between the United States and Greece are unbreakable, and as I stand here, in the center of American democracy, I am reminded of the strength of the shared democratic values on which our long partnership is based.

Greece has made incredible contributions to the world, not least of which is developing the ideals of democracy and rule of law that inspired our Founding Fathers to establish our American system of government. The very architecture of the Capitol building is a tribute to the foundational role Greece played in the shaping of our democracy and society. The democratic ideals developed in ancient Greece continue to motivate Americans, and people around the world, today.

The people of the United States in turn worked to support the people of Greece as they began their own struggle for independence 200 years ago. American Philhellene Committees, comprised of ordinary Americans, sprung up to support the Greek fight for freedom through fundraising and humanitarian assistance.

Members of Congress, including Daniel Webster applauded “the struggle of an interesting and gallant people...contending against fearful odds...for the common privilege of human nature.” In a letter to Greek scholar Adamantios Koraes, whose work formed the intellectual basis for the Greek independence struggle, Thomas Jefferson demonstrated his support by writing that “no people sympathise more feelingly than ours with the sufferings of your countrymen, none offer more sincere and ardent prayers to heaven for their success.”

Several American Philhellenes traveled to Greece to assist the Greek people more directly. Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, who later became a prominent voice in America's fight to end slavery, served with the Greek army as a surgeon and a soldier. Jonathan Peckham Miller, another future noted abolitionist, also served in the Greek Army. George Jarvis fought alongside the Greek people as well as working to provide food, medicine, and clothing to those who needed it with the support of the American Philhellene Committees.

M. President, the bonds between the peoples and governments of Greece and the United States have lasted throughout our countries' long history, and are stronger than ever today. Greece is an invaluable partner to the United States as a NATO member, as an EU member, and in promoting peace and stability in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean region. Greece's unwavering commitment to democracy and the rule of law makes it a truly reliable ally in the region, and an increasingly critical one as we face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I am proud that Congress demonstrated its support for further boosting U.S.-Greece cooperation, and U.S. support for the Greece-Cyprus-Israel trilateral, with the passage of the Eastern Mediterranean Security and Energy Partnership Act a little over a year ago. Ensuring full implementation of this Act is one of my priorities as Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.

The past few years have seen critical developments in U.S.-Greece relations. I am grateful to the leadership of officials in both countries whose work has helped U.S.-Greece ties reach their strongest level ever, including Ambassador Geoff Pyatt, and I look forward to building on their fantastic efforts in the months and years to come.

M. President, this 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Greece's independence truly is a time to celebrate. A time to celebrate Greece's hard-won freedom. A time to celebrate the bonds between our peoples, and especially the many contributions Greek Americans have made to this country. And a time to celebrate our countries' shared history and democratic values, which will be the basis of our countries' cooperation for years to come.

This week, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee unanimously approved a resolution congratulating the people of Greece on the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their independence. I am grateful to Senator Barrasso for joining me in leading this resolution, and to my many Senate colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have co-sponsored this resolution. With the passage of this resolution every year, Congress, and through us the American people, send a clear message of support for the Greek people and our countries' enduring partnership.

Greece's 200<sup>th</sup> independence anniversary serves not only as a reminder of our countries' long friendship, but also as a time for us to look to build on that history and strengthen our partnership for generations to come. The Eastern Mediterranean region and the world face unprecedented challenges, and growing the U.S.-Greece relationship is more critical than ever for our shared security and stability. I look forward to working with the people of Greece, and the Greek-American community, to make the vision of an even stronger U.S.-Greece relationship a reality.