2020-2021 Report | Cyprus & Hellenic Affairs Committee

**T**

**o the Delegates/Alternates of the 99th Supreme Convention:**

The AHEPA Cyprus & Hellenic Affairs Committee expresses its profound appreciation to Supreme President George G. Horiates for his selfless leadership, confidence and support this past year along with deep thanks to the Supreme Lodge, Board of Trustees, and Executive Director Basil Mossaidis. I also would like to personally thank the members of the Committee and extend my personal gratitude to our consultant, Andrew Kaffes, without whose efforts, guidance, advice and direction, would have seriously jeopardized our ability to promote our causes to Congress and Federal Agencies. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic derailing in-person plans and activities during almost all of 2020 and much of 2021, AHEPA still made the 2020-2021 administrative year a productive one.

LEGISLATION UPDATE & ENGAGEMENT WITH CONGRESS

Legislation: A resolution to recognize the 200th anniversary of Greek Independence.

• Resolution Number: H.Res.246

• Sponsors: U.S. Representatives Carolyn Maloney and Gus Bilirakis

• Number of Co-Sponsors: 11

• Of Note: The resolution’s companion in the U.S. Senate, S.Res.34, passed the Senate by unanimous consent.

 Supreme President George Horiates was quoted in Rep. Maloney press release about H.Res.246’s introduction and participated in Congressional Hellenic Caucus press conference.

Legislation: A resolution to express the sense of the Congress that the Parthenon Marbles should be returned to Greece.

• Resolution Number: H.Res.254

• Sponsors: U.S. Representatives Carolyn Maloney and Gus Bilirakis

• Co-Sponsors: 10

Legislation: A bill to oppose violations of religious freedom in Turkey and safeguard the rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

• Bill Number: H.R.3056

• Sponsors: U.S. Representatives Carolyn Maloney and Gus Bilirakis

• Co-Sponsors: 10

 Supreme President George Horiates was quoted in Rep. Maloney’s press release.

Legislation: A resolution condemning Turkey for its illegal occupation of Cyprus and encouraging the Biden administration to make Cyprus a foreign policy priority.

• Resolution Number: H.Res.376

• Sponsor: U.S. Representative Nicole Malliotakis

• Co-Sponsors: 6

• Supreme President George Horiates was quoted in Rep. Malliotakis’ press release.

Legislation: U.S.-Greece Defense and Interparliamentary Partnership Act of 2021

• Bill Number: S.2000

• Sponsors: U.S. Senators Robert Menendez and Marco Rubio

• Co-sponsors: 4

• Of Note: The Senate Foreign Relations Committee advanced the legislation, as amended, favorably, on June 22, 2021.

• Of Note: U.S. Representatives Gus Bilirakis and Ted Deutch announced the introduction of a companion bill in the House of Representatives, June 25, 2021.

2021 NDAA. In a July 17 letter to the House Rules Committee, Supreme President George G. Horiates conveyed AHEPA's support for two amendments offered to the FY2021 annual defense authorization bill (NDAA), H.R.6395. The amendments were:

• Kinzinger/Spanberger - Requires a determination on the imposition of sanctions with respect to the Government of Turkey’s acquisition of the S-400 air and missile defense system from the Russian Federation

• Bilirakis/Pappas - Requires a feasibility study on increased rotational deployments to Greece and encourages enhanced U.S. diplomatic engagement w/ Greece-Cyprus-Israel & Greece-Cyprus-Egypt.

Both amendments were adopted and passed by the House of Representatives as part of the larger annual defense bill on July 21.

• Eventually, Congress imposed mandatory sanctions on Turkey for its violation of CAATSA with its passage of the FY2021 NDAA on Dec. 10, 2021, which AHEPA applauded.

• The defense bill also strengthened U.S.-Greece defense cooperation with an authorization to appropriate $50.18 million for military construction at Souda Bay, Crete in addition to requiring a feasibility study of increased rotational deployments to Greece.

FY2021 Appropriations/Hagia Sophia. An AHEPA-backed bipartisan amendment sponsored by U.S. Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV) that is accompanied by language that encourages the U.S. Department of State to denounce Turkey for taking formal action to change the status of Hagia Sophia passed the U.S. House of Representatives, July 23, 2020. The language also encouraged the State Department to engage with Turkey for purpose of returning its status to a museum. The amendment was part of a larger FY2021 funding bill, H.R.7608, that eventually became law.

ADDITIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Supreme President George Horiates also presented remarks at a virtual celebration of Greek Independence hosted by U.S. Rep. Nicole Malliotakis (R-NY) and held in honor of Pfizer CEO Dr. Albert Bourla, March 29, 2021. U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Greek Ambassador to the U.S. Alexandra Papadopoulou and Cypriot Ambassador to the U.S. Marios Lysiotis, joined U.S. Rep. Malliotakis in the celebration. Malliotakis also commended AHEPA for its natural disaster relief efforts following Superstorm Sandy and other devastating natural disasters throughout the world. Several community leaders also participated.

Supreme President George Horiates participated at a Hellenic Caucus roundtable discussion about the Caucus’s policy priorities and goals for the 117th Congress on June 24, 2021.

CONGRESSIONAL INFO-CARD

The 2020 AHEPA Congressional Info-Card for the 116th Congress on the public policy priorities of the American Hellenic community was released during the week of October 2020. As an educational piece, the Info-Card presents data on members of Congress and their co-sponsorship of legislation and votes taken on legislation of importance to AHEPA

CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS ON HELLENIC ISSUES

 The Hellenic Caucus stands at 101 members.

We surely can, and must, do more to build the Hellenic Caucus.

CAPITOL HILL DAY

Unfortunately, Capitol Hill Day was postponed due to COVID-19. We look forward to its resumption when normalcy returns to Capitol Hill.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ADMINISTRATION

AHEPA sent a formal request to President Joseph Biden, Jr., asking for the United States government to recognize the Greek Genocide, June 7, 2021.

On August 13, 2021, AHEPA sent a letter to President Donald J. Trump to convey the Order’s alarm and grave concern about Turkey’s aggressive acts in the Aegean and urged President Trump to encourage Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to send a strong message to Turkey to stop its hostile behavior in the region. Moreover, in the letter, Supreme President Horiates asked the Administration to 1) condemn Turkey’s actions and 2) to impose sanctions on Turkey for its violation of U.S. law.

The U.S. Department of State has responded to AHEPA’s concerns about Turkey’s provocations in the Aegean. In an August 4, 2020 letter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Matthew Palmer, who responded at the request of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, to a July 22 letter sent by Supreme President Horiates about Turkey's provocations in the Aegean conveyed the United States' "deep concern." Palmer stated, "We continue to urge Turkish authorities to halt these activities and to avoid steps that raise tensions in the region. We fully agree that a conflict between two NATO Allies must be avoided."

STATEMENTS

AHEPA lauded President Joseph Biden, Jr.’s recognition of the Armenian Genocide in an April 26, 2021 statement.

AHEPA congratulated President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. and Vice President Kamala Harris on their inauguration in a January 20, 2021 statement. AHEPA also welcomed the U.S. Senate's confirmation of Antony Blinken to serve as Secretary of State.

AHEPA mourned the passing of Civil Rights Icon U.S. Representative John Lewis, a recipient of the 2015 AHEPA Pericles Award. Representative Lewis passed away in July 2020.

AHEPA mourned the passing of former U.S. Senator Paul S. Sarbanes, a recipient of the 1993 AHEPA Socrates Award and AHEPA Life Member. Senator Sarbanes passed away in December 2020.

Additionally, during the administrative year, AHEPA welcomed, applauded, or commended instances of U.S. government action or statements that bolstered bilateral relations between the United States and Greece.

AHEPA applauded the Trump administration’s decision to waive the limitations placed on the transfer of non-lethal arms equipment to the Republic of Cyprus for one year. In April 2020, Supreme President Horiates wrote to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo requesting him to exercise his authority granted by Executive Order to waive the limitations placed on the Republic of Cyprus by U.S. law, thus allowing for the transfer of defense articles.

AHEPA commended the United States' December 14, 2020 decision to impose sanctions on Turkey for its procurement of the Russian S-400 missile defense system under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, which is a clear threat to the United States' national security. Although overdue, this policy measure by the Trump administration, with bipartisan pressure from Congress, sent a strong and pointed message to Turkey.

Recap: AHEPA’s Advocacy to Hold Turkey Accountable

• In November 2019, Supreme President Horiates wrote to then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to request the secretary, under authority designated to him by Executive Order, to impose sanctions on Turkish entities pursuant to Section 231 of CAATSA based upon press accounts that reported Turkey tested the S-400 missile defense system against F-16 aircraft.

• Horiates' November 2019 letter followed-up on his October 2019 letter to then-Secretary Pompeo that inquired about the status of the United States sanctioning Turkey under CAATSA.

• Also in November 2019, Supreme President Horiates met with key policymakers in foreign policy on Capitol Hill, including then-Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jim Risch (R-ID) and then-House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Eliot Engel (D-NY), among others, to work to hold Turkey accountable for its actions.

• In July 2020, AHEPA asked the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to press then-Secretary Pompeo on the issue during a committee hearing, which then-Ranking Member Robert Menendez (D-NJ) correctly did. (video)

• During the summer of 2020, Supreme President Horiates again wrote to then-Secretary Pompeo, stating the U.S. must impose sanctions on Turkey, which received a response from the State Department.

• Ahepans mobilized following a September 2020 memo Supreme President Horiates sent a memo and provided a mobilization tool kit to chapters that included talking points on the policy matter. AHEPA also placed an advocacy ad in several Greek American publications.

Additional Issues and Action Taken

Turkey Boycott. AHEPA has pursued a boycott of Turkey campaign, educating the community about what products and services emanate from Turkey.

Turkey Protest. Supreme President Horiates led a contingent of Ahepans who participated at a protest of Turkey held at the Embassy of Turkey in Washington, DC, August 14, 2020. The Hellenic Cultural Center organized the protest.

Visa Wavier Program. With Congress and the Administration, AHEPA continuously and closely monitors Greece’s standing in the United States Visa Waiver Program.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to serve the Order of AHEPA. It has been a great honor to work on behalf of this important committee.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Zenon Christodoulou

Chairman