

March 28, 2006- Sanchez Honors Greek Independence

Honorable Loretta Sanchez

Statement for the Congressional Record

Honoring 185 Years of Greek Independence

March 28, 2006

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the great nation of Greece and celebrate with its citizens 185 years of independence from the Ottoman Empire.

Any first-year university student knows Greece to be one of the ancient cradles of Western Civilization. In art and literature, history and philosophy, science and mathematics, the contributions of the Greek people to the world as we know it are immeasurable.

And of course, one of Greece's most significant contributions to modern civilization is that of democratic governance. The influences of Socrates, Plato, Pericles, Solon, and many others provided the basis for our founding fathers' essays and treaties on life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

These ancient thinkers planted the seeds of modern democracy, but the people of modern Greece did not reap the benefits until over two thousand years later. In 1821, the Greek people declared independence from the Ottoman Empire, marking the beginning of an eleven-year struggle for freedom. It is this courageous action that we honor today.

The Greek revolutionaries' valiant efforts inspired the support of a fledgling democracy known as the United States of America. Many Americans left home and volunteered to fight alongside the Greeks, and this Congress also sent money and supplies to assist in Greece's struggle for autonomy. Since that time, the U.S. and Greece have worked side-by-side to oppose tyranny and oppression and advance the cause of democracy worldwide.

But our ties with Greece do not end with this shared commitment to the principles of democracy. Indeed, today more than 1 million people of Greek descent live in the United States. These men and women have made innumerable contributions to our society and way of life, and for this we thank them.

Colleagues, please join me in saluting the people of Greece for their tremendous commitment to democracy and the principles that helped to found our nation.