

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.