

Athens Hellenic Heritage Panel Presentation
Thursday, December 8, 2011, 1930H

Thank you Mr. Economou
for that kind introduction.

Members of the American Hellenic Institute,
distinguished guests,
good evening and thank you
for inviting me here tonight.

It is an honor and a privilege
to participate in this evening's
event with you.

I appreciate the exceptional work
that the American Hellenic Institute
does to preserve and enhance
the ties of friendship and cooperation
that exist between
the United States and Greece.

American Hellenic Institute members
care deeply about the United States'
relationship with Greece
and our shared devotion
to the ideals
of freedom and democracy.

Whether through political engagement,
business activity, or events like this,
your work strengthens
the rich and vibrant relationship
between the United States and Greece.

I am pleased to be able to state
that Greek-American relations
are strong and robust.

This is illustrated vividly
by the successful visit
of Vice-President Biden
to Greece earlier this week,
as well as by Secretary Clinton's visit
here this summer.

But while such visits
give us the opportunity
to shine the spotlight
on our bilateral relationship,
the true foundation of the relationship
is in the depth and breadth
of the people-to-people contacts
that take place every day
in fields ranging from
business and academia
to religion and culture.

Our societies and our people
continue to be connected
through the large and prosperous
Greek-American community
that has contributed much
to America's social fabric.

Today, of course,
a new chapter is being written
in the Greek story,
and it is not an easy one,
as the country faces
significant challenges.

I am optimistic, however,
that following the path of reform
is the right course,
and that today's sacrifices
will ensure
a more prosperous future.

The United States has made clear
its strong support
for Greece's reform efforts,
and is actively engaged
with European leaders
to address the broader
Euro zone economic crisis.

We have much at stake.

As President Obama has noted,

Europe is “the cornerstone
of our engagement with the world.”

It is our most important global partner.

Greece is an important part
of our overall partnership
with Europe.

Our two countries
share common regional objectives,
including the desire to integrate
the Balkans into Trans-Atlantic
and European institutions.

We share common interests
in combating terrorism
and promoting peace
in the Middle East.

We share a common commitment
to the NATO Alliance;
Greece recently played a key role
during NATO's efforts to implement
United Nations Security Council
resolutions and protect civilians
in Libya from Qadhafi's regime.

Indeed, wherever there is
a pressing issue
on the international stage,
the U.S. and Europe are natural partners,
and Greece contributes greatly
to that partnership.

The lesson I draw from this is
that the longstanding friendship
between our two countries
goes beyond any specific,
narrowly defined interests.

We have stood
by each other's side
through terrible wars
and politically difficult times.

Notwithstanding

the economic challenges we all face,

we will continue to cooperate

to achieve our common goals

both in this region

and around the world.

In closing, I believe

that the bonds between our peoples

are a source of strength

that transcend politics

and foster friendship

and collaboration

on all levels of our societies.

I look forward
to continuing to work
with all of you in the future,
and I look forward
to answering your questions tonight
and your company during the reception
later this evening.

Thank you.