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## **PALLONE INTRODUCES BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION ALLOWING CYPRIOT-AMERICANS TO SEEK REMEDIES FOR PROPERTY THEY OWN IN TURKISH OCCUPIED CYPRUS**

### ***Disturbed By Sharp Increase In Unlawful Investments & Construction***

Washington, D.C. --- U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) introduced bipartisan legislation yesterday that would allow U.S. citizens who own property in the Turkish occupied portion of the Republic of Cyprus to seek financial remedies with either the current inhabitants of their land or the Turkish government.

For the 30 years since Turkey invaded the Republic of Cyprus, U.S. citizens who own real property in the portion of the Republic of Cyprus that is occupied by Turkey have been excluded from the use and enjoyment of that real property. Pallone said it's unconscionable that Turkey, a U.S. ally, who has been, and continues to be, the beneficiary of significant aid and support from this nation, excludes U.S. citizens from property to which they hold lawful titles under the laws of the Republic of Cyprus.

The New Jersey congressman, a member of the Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues, said passage of this legislation is critical at a time when reports show sharp increases in the number of unlawful investments of occupied properties and a construction boom on land that continues to be owned by approximately 170,000 Greek Cypriots who were forced to flee their homes and businesses in 1974.

The increases appear to stem from false impressions created by the Annan Plan, rightfully rejected by the Greek Cypriots, that left many thinking unlawful property investments in the occupied area would be safeguarded once a solution to the Cyprus problem was reached. These impressions have led to a huge increase in the number of property applications submitted by foreign nationals to purchase properties in the occupied north, properties that still belong to Greek Cypriots. Over the past four years, property applications have increased by 78 percent from 228 in 2000 to 1,701 during the first nine months of 2004.

"I'm extremely disturbed by the increasing number of illegal property transactions taking place in the Turkish occupied section of Cyprus," Pallone said. "Congress can no longer ignore the fact that Cypriot-Americans have no financial restitution on properties they still own in Cyprus. It's time for Congress to act so these U.S. citizens have the opportunity to seek remedies for being illegally excluded from their real property by Turkey, and so that internationally recognized principles of law on property ownership are reaffirmed."

The *American Owned Property In Occupied Cyprus Claims Act*, (H.R. 5071) will enable U.S. citizens to seek remedies in the following three different ways:

- 1) The bill authorizes the President to initiate a claims program under which the claims of U.S. nationals who Turkey has excluded from their property in occupied Cyprus can be judged by the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission (FCSC) and compensated through government-to-government negotiations between the United States and Turkey.
- 2) The bill empowers the United States district courts to hear causes of action asserted by U.S. nationals who have been excluded from their property in occupied Cyprus against private persons or entities that occupy or use the property of U.S. nationals in occupied Cyprus.
- 3) The bill empowers the United States district courts to hear causes of action asserted by U.S. nationals who have been excluded from property their in occupied Cyprus against Turkey without having to assert those causes of action under the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act of 1976 as amended.

Pallone first introduced this legislation last September during the 108th Congress. He worked with Nick Larigakis, Executive Director of the American Hellenic Institute (AHI), and Nick Karambelas, volunteer counsel of AHI, for several months to draft the legislation, and he thanks them for their invaluable contribution.

The New Jersey Congressman is pleased to be joined by U.S. Reps. Michael Bilirakis (R-FL) and Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), the co-chairs of the Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues, and U.S. Reps. Ken Calvert (R-CA), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ), Robert Andrews (D-NJ), Mike Rogers (R-AL), Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), James McGovern (D-MA) and Michael McNulty (D-NY) as original sponsors of this legislation.

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