

Greek Americans gain a seat in the House of Representatives

Washington, D.C.- The National Coordinated Effort of Hellenes (CEH) released an analysis of how the U.S. Congress changed, following the elections on November 4, particularly with regard to Greece and Cyprus' top advocates (and detractors) and how Hellenic and Orthodox issues may be handled differently with the new line-up.

While a number of our strongest supporters seemed vulnerable to being defeated, including those on the key Committees and Subcommittees that handle U.S. policy toward Cyprus, almost all were re-elected. As well, of the over 59 Members of Congress and 10 Senators who will not be in office next year (because they were defeated, elected to another office or are retiring), very few were strong

supporters. In fact, a vast majority had not been engaged in Hellenic and Orthodox issues at all.

In the end, the greatest determinant of how Hellenic and Orthodox issues may be handled differently in the 111th Congress (2009 – 2010) will be who are the Chairmen, Ranking Members, and Members of the key Committees and Subcommittees that handle the Cyprus issue. These changes are just beginning and won't be finalized until December or later. All six "Greek-Americans" in the House and Senate will remain. Greek-Americans Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), John Sarbanes (D-MD) and Zack Space (D-OH) were re-elected, with 63%, 70% and 60% of the vote, respectively. At the beginning of this election

cycle, Congressman Space was one of the top three Members of Congress targeted by the Republican party to defeat, as he was elected in a traditionally Republican district. However, he ran an excellent campaign and won by a wide margin. Congresswoman Shelley Berkley (D-NV), whose family is from the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki, Greece, was re-elected with 68% of the vote. Greek Orthodox Christian, and wife of a former Greek-American Senator and Presidential candidate, Niki Tsongas (D-MA), was re-elected, running unopposed. In the U.S. Senate, Greek-American Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME) was not up for re-election (and will not be so until 2012).

Tourism minister on Greek-French relations since 18th century

Tourist Development Minister Aris Spiliotopoulos focused on management issues in the tourist development sector in his address at the Apogevmatini conference on Monday on the theme of "Greek-French relations from the 18th century until our days," stressing that the French market is of particular importance for Greece.

The minister said that over the past years Greece has been receiving 700,000-750,000 French visitors on an annual basis, holding 10th position in the preferences of French travellers. Greece's immediate aim is to reach the figure of one million visitors from France in 2010 which, in the minister's view, can be accomplished despite the unfavourable economic conjuncture.

Spiliotopoulos pointed out that if this is achieved, Greece will consolidate itself in eighth place regarding the destinations chosen by the French, while the ministry's medium-term target is stabilising this figure and attracting from France as many high-income visitors as possible.

Greek smokers face high disease rates

Greeks, known as being among Europe's heaviest smokers, suffer high rates of pulmonary disease, with non-smokers also facing health risks, statistics published showed.

According to Constantinos Gourgoulialis, the head of Greece's Pneumonological Society, 8.4 per cent of all Greeks suffer from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease although in rural areas the number rises to 15.1 per cent.

The news for urban residents is not much better as Athenians who are non-smokers actually inhale the equivalent of up to four cigarettes a day from other people who do smoke, according to a report published in the Greek daily Kathimerini newspaper.

Greece has just over a year to go



before a ban outlaws the habit in all public places, including restaurants, bars and offices as of January 1, 2010.

The new law will have a heavy impact on a nation where nearly 45 per cent of the adult population smokes, and where smoking in offices and cafes is seen as a traditional pastime. The government has already banned smoking in hospitals and taxis

and requires restaurant and bar owners to designate smoking and non-smoking areas to safeguard public health. However, the measures have been widely ignored. The Health Ministry has said the new law is aimed at saving the lives of an estimated 6,000 people who die every year from smoking in Greece.

Under the new law, smoking will be banned in public places, including all bars and restaurants, offices, hospitals and on all forms of public transport. The restrictions will also apply in all outlets that produce and sell food.

Under the new law, there will be designated areas set aside for smokers in offices. The bill also aims to keep minors under the age of 18 from smoking and consuming alcohol by banning their access to bars and clubs.

It will also impose a fine of 1,000 euros (\$1,953) on the owners and managers of bars and nightclubs that fail to respect the restrictions.

Repeat offenders will face fines of up to 20,000 euros (\$39,721) and have their licenses revoked. The bill also foresees similar fines for those caught selling cigarettes to minors.

Unlike most of the rest of the European Union, Greece has no age limit on the purchase of tobacco, according to the World Health Organization.

Article from The Age

Athens-Beijing bicycle ride

Two of history's greatest ancient civilizations, China and Greece, collaborated to promote peace, friendship and earth-friendly mobility.

The Olympia 2 Beijing Ride was a team of Chinese and Greek cyclists that departed from Ancient Olympia, home of the first Olympiad in 776 BC, and arrived five months later to Beijing in time for the 2008 Olympics – roughly 12,000 kilometers.

Just as Greek explorers and Chinese traders of the past used non-motorized means of travel, so too does the Chinese-Greek team. They travel by bicycle to publicize the environmental and health benefits of the bicycle.

The cyclists' mission was also to inspire the world community by the team's resurrection of the original Olympian spirit of friendly cooperation, noble competition and ending the conflicts on earth.

Olympia-Beijing: crossing Asia on bike, icons from the journey stories of ours and yours" was the topic of an event held on November 19th at the Aristotle university of Thessaloniki where 58 bicyclists from 14 countries

presented images from their journey from Olympia to Beijing.

Two Greeks, 21-year-old Danae Tezapsidou and 32-year-old Vassilis Mesitidis, were among the team of cyclists that participated in the bike ride from Ancient Olympia to Beijing via the so-called "silk road" in order to highlight the 2008 Olympic Games in China.

The two Greek nationals were part of a team of 12 cyclists, among them four women, whose other members hailed from Poland, Lithuania, Italy and the United States. The idea originated with a team of cyclists in Poland and was organised under the auspices of the Polish Olympic Committee.

The countries the cyclists crossed on their route included Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and much of China. Each member of the group will travel at his or her own pace but gather at a meeting point each night, where they will camp before continuing their journey, thus covering roughly 100 kilometres a day.