



Rhode Island General Assembly



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 26, 2025

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PRESS RELEASE

RI's Hellenic communities honored by strong show of support from elected officials in the celebration of the 204th Anniversary of Greek Independence Day and the Feast of the Annunciation

General officers, legislative leaders, mayors, Secretary General for International Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece Dimitris Skalkos, Consul General of Greece to New England Symeon Tegos, Sen. Leonidas “Lou” Raptakis and Newport Mayor Charles Holder gather at the State House

Bill sponsored by Sen. Raptakis to create a Rhode Island Greek Heritage license plate in conjunction with the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) approved by Senate

STATE HOUSE – Sen. Leonidas P. Raptakis (D-Dist. 33, Coventry and West Greenwich), the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church of Cranston, Assumption Greek Orthodox Church of Pawtucket and the St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church of Newport and Rhode Island's Hellenic communities hosted a celebration of Greek Independence Day at the Rhode Island State House on March 25, bringing together federal and state

leaders, mayors and members of all three Hellenic communities to recognize the 204th anniversary of Greece's independence and the Feast of the Annunciation.



Rhode State House dome lit in blue in honor of Greek Independence Day

Throughout the week leading to the State House celebration, Greece's national flag was flown at the city halls of Cranston, Newport and Pawtucket, where Mayors Kenneth Hopkins, Charles Holder, Donald Grebien and Brett Smiley respectively presented their traditional proclamations honoring the Greek communities. During the celebration, Greece's national flag was flown and displayed in five different areas of the Rhode Island State House - the State Room, the Senate President's office, the Senate chamber, the House chamber and atop the State House building. The State House dome was lit in blue and white in honor of Greek Independence Day for the week, a tradition that started in 1993 by Senator Raptakis. The delegation met with Governor of Rhode Island Daniel McKee and Senate leaders in separate meetings, which included Majority Leader Valarie J. Lawson (D-Dist. 14, East Providence), Majority Whip David P. Tikoian (D-Dist. 22, Smithfield, North Providence, Lincoln), Sen. Hanna M. Gallo (D-Dist. 27, Cranston, West Warwick) and Sen. Matthew L. LaMountain (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston), in the Senate President's office to discuss many related issues before the celebration Secretary General for International Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece Dimitris Skalkos, Consul General of Greece to New England

Symeon Tegos, Senator Raptakis and Newport Mayor Charles Holder. Also, in attendance from the Federation of Hellenic Societies New England was General Secretary Olga Fotos.



From left to right: Senator Raptakis, Father Andrew George, Dr. Donna Raptakis, Father Nick Lanzourakis, Commander Konstantinos Vaskakis of the Hellenic Navy, Chief of Staff Iakovos Iakovidis, Consul General Tegos, Majority Leader Valarie J. Lawson, Secretary General for International Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece Dimitris Skalkos, Majority Whip David P. Tikoian, Sen. Matthew L. LaMountain, Sen. Hanna M. Gallo, Olga Fotos of the Federation of Hellenic Society of New England, Paul Kallis and Constantine Coclin

In the Rhode Island Senate Chamber, the invocation was given by Father Nicholas Lanzourakis from the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cranston, the Pledge of Allegiance by Senator Raptakis and there was a reading of a Senate Resolution recognizing Greek Independence Day ([2025-S 0880](#)). Secretary General for International Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece Dimitris Skalkos and Consul General of Greece to New England Symeon Tegos were recognized for their service to the Hellenic Republic, and in the Rhode Island House of Representatives, Father Philip Zymaris from the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church of Pawtucket gave

the invocation. This year's House resolution ([2025-H 6130](#)) was sponsored by House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick). Both House and Senate resolutions commemorating the Feast of the Annunciation and the 204th Anniversary of Greece's declaration of independence emphasize the continuing bonds between both the United States and Greece. Both Senate and House resolutions recognize the continuing support by the United States to the people of Greece, especially the historic ties between both nations, as well as expanding economic and defense cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean. The resolutions also emphasized the recent meeting between United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Greek Foreign Minister Giorgos Gerapetritis in Washington D.C last month, underscoring the strength of the bilateral relationship and shared commitment as NATO Allies to democracy, peace and prosperity.



Consul General of Greece to New England Symeon Tegos thanking Senator Raptakis for the passage of the Senate resolution honoring Greek Independence Day. Dr. Donna Raptakis sits beside her husband.

Legislation ([2025-S 0155](#)) sponsored by Senator Raptakis that would create a Rhode Island Greek Heritage license plate in conjunction with the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA) was also approved by the Senate. Ioanna

Dafoulas Savoie will be the designer for all the AHEPA Hellenic license plates.

Following the ceremonies in the Senate and House chambers, as part of the main program in the Governor's State Room, the invocation and benediction was delivered by Fathers Nicholas Lanzourakis and Andrew George from the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Cranston. Along with Father Philip Zymaris from the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in Pawtucket, Aaron Walker from the St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in Newport and the audience joined together to sing the national anthems of the United States and the Hellenic Republic.



Father Nick Lanzourakis of the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, Senator Raptakis and Governor of Rhode Island Daniel McKee

Letters were offered by the entire Rhode Island Congressional delegation, United States Senators Jack Reed and Sheldon Whitehouse, and Congressmen Seth Magaziner and Gabe Amo. Remarks and greetings were given by Governor Dan McKee, Lt. Governor Sabina Matos, Secretary of State Gregg Amore and General Treasurer James Diossa. Attorney General Peter Neronha could not attend, but offered proclamations to

all three of Rhode Island's Hellenic communities. Speaker of the House of Representatives K. Joseph Shekarchi (D-Dist. 23, Warwick), Senate Minority Leader Jessica de la Cruz (R-Dist. 23, Burrillville, Glocester, North Smithfield), Mayors Charles Holder of Newport, Brett Smiley of Providence also offered their greetings. Mayors Kenneth Hopkins of Cranston and Donald Grebien of Pawtucket, could not attend, but sent a letter of greetings and support. Charles Psilopoulos, a police officer from the Town of Johnston, Rhode Island, was honored for his service to his community and also addressed the audience. Krystina Nicolopoulos Cesario from the RI State House Internship Office was also recognized for their state service. Also giving remarks from the Hellenic Navy was Commander Konstatinos Vaskas, who is participating in a program at the Naval War College in Newport.



Rhode Island's Hellenic community in the Governor's State Room

Representing the Hellenic Republic, Secretary General for International Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece Dimitris Skalkos and Consul General of Greece to New England Symeon Tegos gave their greetings. Constatine Coklin was this year's co-emcee from the host community of Annunciation

Greek Orthodox Church in Cranston, Rhode Island.



Dimitris Skalkos, Secretary General for International Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece

Senator Raptakis emphasized that “For over 32 years, this event has been held in the General Assembly chambers and the State Room and it is always a wonderful expression of our strong Hellenic community in Rhode Island and the strong connection between this state, known for its commitment to independence, and the nation which was the birthplace of democracy,” Raptakis praised Rhode Island’s Congressional delegation “I want to thank our entire Rhode Island Congressional delegation, who not only have the best voting record when it comes to supporting the many Hellenic issues, but also attended to voice their support for Greece and Cyprus, especially in the volatile region of the Eastern Mediterranean.”



RI House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi, Commander Konstantinos Vaskakis of the Hellenic Navy, Consul General Tegos and Dimitris Skalkos, Secretary General for International Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece

Senator Raptakis also went on to thank all of his colleagues in government who attended and celebrated the heroes of 1821 and Rhode Island's Hellenic community's contribution to the State of Rhode Island. Federation of Hellenic Societies New England General Secretary Olga Fotos offered her sincere congratulations to the Hellenic community of Rhode Island. Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church Greek Language teachers Ioanna Andreopoulou and Koula Rougas, Assumption Greek Orthodox Church Principal Panayiota Vastis, Greek language teachers, Stavroula Papavasileiou and Sophia Augoustakis, St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church teachers Eleni Anagnostopoulos and Loula Eliopoulos facilitated the children's program from their respective communities. Parish council Presidents Paul Kallis of Annunciation Greek Orthodox, Elaine Holder of St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox and Vice-President Andrea Vastis of Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, along with American Hellenic Education Progressive Association Presidents George Coclin of the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, were all in attendance.



Greek American Charles Holder, Mayor of Newport, Rhode Island

Agoritsa Liakou, Konstantinos Rougas and Sofia Masganas, students from the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Cranston, recited a poem that praises freedom. Demitris Kosivas and Eleftherios Papavasiliou from the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in Pawtucket recited the poem *“To Ellinopoulo.”* Diamandes Nicolas and Theodore Soares from St. Spyridon Church in Newport recited the poems *“The 25th of March”* and *“Up High in Our Blue Sky Flies Our Sweet Flag.”*

The event concluded with group photos inside the Governor’s State Room with many of the dignitaries, participants, family and friends.



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Demitris Kosivas and Eleftherios Papavasiliou from the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in Pawtucket



Diamandes Nicolas and Theodore Soares from St. Spyridon Church in Newport



Rhode Island Governor's State Room with Secretary General for International Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece Dimitris Skalkos, Consul General of Greece to New England Symeon Tegos, State Senator Leonidas Raptakis, Newport Mayor Charles Holder and co-emcee Constantine Coclin with the Rhode Island Hellenic Community

A reception sponsored by the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church of Cranston was held in Cranston, Rhode Island following the program at the State House in which Constantine Coclin member of church was the emcee of the program.

For video of the celebration, [click here](#).

For video of the Senate session, [click here](#).

For video of the House session, [click here](#).

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