



July 10, 2017

The Honorable Pete Sessions
Chairman
The Committee on Rules
H-312 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Louise Slaughter
Ranking Member
The Committee on Rules
H-312 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Sessions and Ranking Member Slaughter:

On behalf of the membership of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (Order of AHEPA), the leading association for the nation's millions of Americans of Hellenic heritage and Philhellenes, I write to convey the organization's support for the following amendments to **H.R.2810, National Defense Authorization Act of 2018**:

- **Amendment 30** offered by U.S. Representative David Cicilline,
- **Amendment 32** offered by U.S. Representatives David Trott and Don Beyer, and
- **Amendment 79** offered by U.S. Representative David Trott.

The U.S. House of Representatives responded swiftly to the brutal May 16, 2017 attack upon peaceful American protesters on American soil perpetrated by the security detail of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan with the resounding passage of H.Res.354, which condemned the violence and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice, by a 397-0 vote. Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Minority Whip Steny Hoyer, Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce and Ranking Member Eliot Engel, introduced the resolution. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson rightfully called the violence "unacceptable" and took proper action to call the Turkish ambassador to the State Department for rebuke.¹

All three amendments take the next, proper congressional action to ensure the perpetrators are brought to justice. In fact, Amendment 79 expresses the sense of Congress that the perpetrators are not rewarded via the proposed sale of approximately 1,600 semi-automatic pistols to a Turkish-controlled intermediary, which in turn, would sell them to the Turkish agency that provides security for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.² The attack was an assault on the First Amendment Constitutional rights of American citizens and not the first one carried-out by the Turkish president's security detail in the United States. There have been three. Undoubtedly, if Congress turns a blind eye to this proposed small-arms sale to the perpetrators of this brutal assault on American citizens, and does not take the proper steps to allow justice to prevail, then Congress condones the security detail's thuggish actions and contradicts the strong and certain message of condemnation conveyed rightfully by the U.S. House of Representatives. The American Hellenic community calls for the passage of all three amendments.

Sincerely,

Andrew C. Zachariades
President

Founded in 1922 in Atlanta, Georgia, on the principles that undergirded its fight for civil rights and against discrimination, bigotry, and hatred felt at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan, AHEPA is the largest and oldest grassroots association of American citizens of Greek heritage and Philhellenes with more than 400 active chapters across the United States, Canada, and Europe. AHEPA's mission is to promote the ancient Greek ideals of Education, Philanthropy, Civic Responsibility, and Family and Individual Excellence through community service and volunteerism.

¹ "Rex Tillerson scolds Turkey's ambassador over attack on protesters," John Siciliano, *Washington Examiner*, May 21, 2017, accessed <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/rex-tillerson-scolds-turkeys-ambassador-over-attack-on-protesters/article/2623744>

² "Gun Deal in Jeopardy for Turkish Guards Who Beat Protesters," Nicholas Fandos, *New York Times*, June 1, 2017, accessed https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/01/us/politics/turkey-guns-us-protest.html?partner=rss&emc=rss&smid=tw-nytimes&smtyp=cur&_r=0