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COMMITTEE ON
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March 13, 2008

The Honorable Nita Lowey, Chairwoman
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations
HB-26, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank Wolf, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Madame Chair Lowey and Ranking Member Wolf:

We are writing to express our deep concern about the elimination of Voice of America's Greek Desk Service and to ask that the Committee restore \$480,000 as part of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, International Broadcasting Operations (IBO) program for FY09 Foreign Operations and Related Agencies Appropriations bill

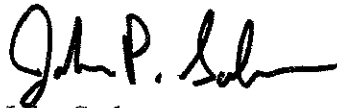
The Greek Desk Service is an essential communications capability upon which we rely to disseminate an accurate and balanced message to crucial audiences abroad. Losing the service is much more than the loss of an important information link between Greece and America. It is a blow to our broader national security and public diplomacy efforts. Indeed, the elimination of the Greek Desk would be detrimental to the interests of the United States in the Eastern Mediterranean. It would remove a dependable and valuable information source, one that projects the best of American journalistic qualities to a vital region and helps to promote American interests and values.

For example, the service helps to foster the ongoing efforts to bolster relations between Greece and Turkey. In fact, the Greek and Turkish VOA Services have proposed a new joint program to promote reunification of Cyprus through the use of television and radio. As a one example of this collaboration, a VOA interview with a former Cypriot Ambassador to the United States was broadcast to Turkey last year.

Finally, the statistics simply do not support elimination. Voice of America's reporting in Greece is well-received by Greek audiences. VOA in Greece receives a 4.5% rating, which in a country of its size, is a substantial audience. Approximately one million people in Greece receive VOA either via TV, Radio, or the Internet.

In short, the value of this Desk is extremely high both in terms of the service it provides to the Eastern Mediterranean region, and its diplomatic benefit to our national interests, especially when one considers its relatively low cost. We urge the Committee to restore these funds. Thank you for your attention to this matter and for all of your hard work and that of your staff throughout this appropriations process.

Sincerely,



John Sarbanes
Member of Congress



Robert Wexler
Member of Congress



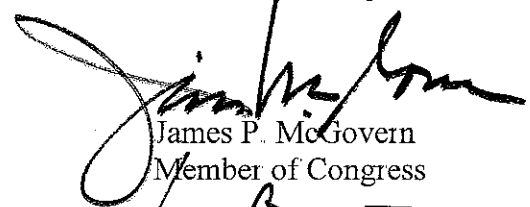
Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress



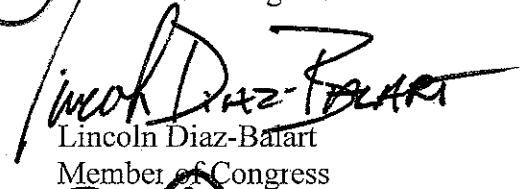
Howard L. Berman
Member of Congress



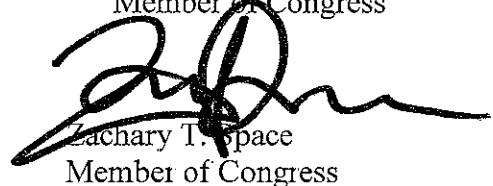
Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Lincoln Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Zachary T. Space
Member of Congress