



ORDER OF AHEPA
SUPREME LODGE HEADQUARTERS
AMERICAN HELLENIC EDUCATIONAL PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION

March 25, 2009

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Greek Independence Day Commemoration

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA), our nation's largest and oldest Greek American organization representing three million American citizens of Greek descent, and countless Philhellenes; I thank you for commemorating the 188th Anniversary of Greek Independence Day with a proclamation and ceremony at the White House on March 25, 2009 and for inviting me to join you on this occasion.

Unfortunately due to what I perceive as a lack of respect which was displayed towards our organization, I felt compelled to respectfully decline attending today's celebration. Despite proactive outreach to the White House, and several attempts to offer AHEPA's resources to your Public Liaison Office, many integral people involved in our leadership, including the National Presidents of our junior auxiliaries and Chairman of the Board, were left off of the invitation list for the March 25th festivities. In addition, those of us who did receive invitations received them at such a late hour that it made travelling to Washington, DC difficult at best. Furthermore, it is my understanding that the list of invitees was compiled by individuals outside the White House and possibly involved vetting by lobbyists. If this is the case I must express my disappointment.

Mr. President, the Order of AHEPA has and continues to be deeply rooted in the fabric of our country. During the course of its 86 year history AHEPA has answered this nation's call to duty on many occasions. Many of our members served, and continue to serve, in our armed forces; AHEPA sold more than \$253 million in World War II war bonds from 1941 to 1943, raised \$612,000 for the restoration of Ellis Island and Statue of Liberty; and is this country's largest developer of HUD financed apartments for the elderly with more than 5,000 units in operation and counting. As a chapter-based, grass roots organization comprised of more than 400 chapters, we are involved in each and every community in which we are chartered. As a community organizer yourself, I am confident you can appreciate the value in an organization like AHEPA, founded by Greek immigrants on the ideals of civic involvement and equality for all of America's citizens. Therefore, I feel it is my duty to call to your attention this failure to recognize AHEPA's status in the Greek American community and to treat it accordingly.

President Obama, I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and discuss ways in which we can assist you to better the lives of Greek Americans and our nation, and to forge a working relationship with you and your new administration.

Respectfully submitted,

Ike Gulas
Supreme President

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